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*Published in:*  
Thinking & reasoning

*DOI:*  
[10.1080/13546783.2014.939225](https://doi.org/10.1080/13546783.2014.939225)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2014

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Pfeiffer, B. E., Deval, H., Kardes, F. R., Hirt, E. R., Karpen, S. C., & Fennis, B. M. (2014). No product is perfect: The positive influence of acknowledging the negative. *Thinking & reasoning*, 20(4), 500-512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13546783.2014.939225>

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## No product is perfect: The positive influence of acknowledging the negative

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Negative acknowledgement is an impression management technique that uses the admission of an unfavourable quality to mitigate a negative response. Although the technique has been clearly demonstrated, the underlying process is not well understood. The current research identifies a key mediator and moderator while also demonstrating that the effect extends beyond the specific acknowledged domain to the overall evaluation of a target object. The results of study 1 indicate that negative acknowledgement works through mitigating negatively valenced cognitive responses. People who are presented with a negative acknowledgement are less likely to counterargue when forming an evaluation. The results of study 2 reveal that individual differences in need for structure impact the effectiveness of the technique. People who are high in need for structure are more susceptible to the effect presumably because of their desire for easy-to-use information that aids the formation and maintenance of simple knowledge structures.

**Keywords:** Social influence; Persuasion; Compliance; Impression management.

In a recent advertisement for their breakfast sandwiches, the Burger King is shown breaking into a McDonald's research facility and stealing the plans for McDonald's sausage McMuffin with egg. The ad ends with the line, "it's not that original, but it's super affordable." Why would Burger King choose

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to be so upfront about acknowledging that their breakfast sandwich is “not that original”?

Research by Ward and Brenner (2006) suggests that beyond the obvious comedic effect, Burger King is leveraging the positive effects of negative acknowledgement. Their research indicates that simply acknowledging an unfavourable quality can help to mitigate the negative impressions associated with the quality. For example, a foreign speaker was rated as having a clearer voice when his strong accent was acknowledged prior to his talk. The acknowledgement of a negative quality led perceivers to evaluate this quality less negatively than if no acknowledgement was provided (Ward & Brenner, 2006).

Although Ward and Brenner (2006) clearly demonstrate the positive influence of the technique and help to more clearly define what negative acknowledgement is and what it is not, they do not offer a process explanation for their results or show that negative acknowledgement could have an influence beyond the specific quality that it addresses. Further, as demonstrated in the Burger King example, this technique may have significant influence in consumer situations; especially if it can be shown that it influences not only the specific quality that is acknowledged (as Ward and Brenner have done) but also the overall evaluation of a product, service, or even a brand. So, in the Burger King example, consumers would not just rate the new offering as less unoriginal but also have a more positive evaluation of the breakfast sandwich as a whole. The goal of the current research is to provide some initial important insight into this effect while also testing its potential effects on the overall evaluation of a product or service.

## NEGATIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Negative acknowledgement is an impression management technique that uses the admission of an unfavourable quality or characteristic to mitigate what would otherwise be a negative evaluation. Ward and Brenner (2006) demonstrated this effect across three studies. Participants who were presented with a negative acknowledgement rated a confusing paragraph as clearer (study 1), a foreign speaker as easier to understand (study 2), and a college applicant as having more positive high school grades (study 3) than when no acknowledgement was provided.

Negative acknowledgement is different from an apology. It does not involve the request to overlook a negative property; it simply draws attention to it. Also, negative acknowledgement is not necessarily intended to obtain help or sympathy. It is merely designed to modify reactions. In the Burger King example, consumers may be less likely to focus on the lack of originality and more likely to focus on the new affordable breakfast offering since Burger King is upfront about copying McDonald's.

In the Ward and Brenner (2006) studies, the negative acknowledgement only influenced the rating of the specific domain that it addressed. For instance, in study 3, the negative acknowledgement that was provided about the student's grades only impacted participants' ratings about the grades. They found no effect on participants' ratings of SAT scores or admission decisions. The authors speculate, however, that the effect might be especially impactful in highly evaluative contexts.

Since products and services are often viewed as a bundle of attributes that provide varying degrees of benefits that are combined to form an overall evaluation (e.g., information integration theory; Anderson, 1981), we predict that a negative acknowledgement should improve not only the rating of the specific attribute domain that it is acknowledging (e.g., originality) but also the overall evaluation of the product or service (e.g., the breakfast sandwich).

H1: The effect of the negative acknowledgement should extend beyond the specific attribute domain to the overall evaluation of the product or service.

## THE MEDIATING ROLE OF COUNTERARGUING

Although Ward and Brenner (2006) clearly demonstrate the positive influence of the technique, they do not offer a process explanation for their results. They do, however, demonstrate that the timing of the acknowledgement is important. In their first study, they found that the acknowledgement was only effective when presented prior to the paragraph to be evaluated. Presenting the negative acknowledgement after the paragraph had no more influence than when no acknowledgement was provided (i.e., the control group). Although they do not discuss how this relates to the underlying process of the effect, this does indicate that the effect is most likely related to information processing. Only when the acknowledgement comes first can it influence the processing of the information provided. If presented afterward, it has no effect because the processing has already taken place.

As a result, one possible explanation for the effect is that it works through mitigating negatively valenced cognitive responses (i.e., counterarguing). Research in persuasion has demonstrated the crucial role of counterarguing in information processing (e.g., Festinger & Maccoby, 1964; Osterhouse & Brock, 1970). Any technique which can impede or decrease counterarguing allows for greater persuasion. For example, the greater effectiveness of two-sided over one-sided communications is thought to result from the fact that two-sided messages decrease participants' perceptions of bias and consequently reduce counterarguing (Kamins, Brand, Hoeks, & Moe, 1989). By analogy, we can expect that acknowledging the negative might serve the same role and therefore decrease counterarguing. Negative acknowledgement by preemptively recognising a potential objection that a

persuasive attempt could raise makes the communication seem more genuine. Because acknowledging a negative may be seen as being forthcoming, people may be less likely to generate negatively valenced cognitive responses (i.e., counterarguments).

H2: The effect of negative acknowledgement should be mediated by the number of negatively valenced cognitive responses.

## THE MODERATING ROLE OF NEED FOR STRUCTURE

Another goal of the present research is to investigate potential individual differences in the effectiveness of negative acknowledgement. To do this, we investigated the moderating influence of need for cognitive closure (NFCC) (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). NFCC refers to the desire to form and maintain a definite belief or evaluation. This variable has been linked with the construction of subjective knowledge and the motivation to generate and consider alternative hypotheses.

Individuals with higher NFCC are more likely to focus on initial cues and information that has clear implications for making judgements and are more likely to avoid complex or ambiguous information that might delay closure. Further, these individuals are less likely to generate or investigate alternative hypotheses since this might delay closure. Individuals with lower NFCC are less susceptible to initial cues and do not shy away from complex or ambiguous information. Further, they are much more likely to generate and investigate alternative hypotheses in an effort to achieve greater evaluative accuracy.

Individual differences in NFCC were measured using the NFCC scale developed by Webster and Kruglanski (1994). Since research has indicated that this measure has two distinct subscales: Decisiveness (DEC) and need for structure (NFS) (Neuberg, Judice, & West, 1997), we treated the NFCC scale as a two-dimensional measure. DEC assesses differences in preferences in the formation of quick evaluations (“seizing”), while NFS assesses individual differences in the preference to form and maintain simple knowledge structures (“freezing”).

Since our predictions were specifically focused on the extent to which people are willing to go beyond simple structure and generate and investigate additional information, we focused primarily on the NFS component of the NFCC measure. More specifically, high NFS individuals have a desire to reduce uncertainty, are motivated to reduce ambiguity, and are more susceptible to using simple knowledge structures. They have a preference for easy-to-use information and are less willing to engage in effortful cognitive processing.

Because acknowledging a negative may be seen as being forthcoming, it might promote a tendency for reciprocity (Cialdini, 2009), and hence, people should be less likely to actively generate negatively valenced thoughts. This

should be especially the case for people who are high in NFS since they should not be motivated to effortfully arrive at a conclusion that has already been acknowledged, and instead may be more susceptible to basic social and cultural conventions like the principle of reciprocity (Fu et al., 2007). Thus, we expect that people high in NFS should be more susceptible to the effects of a negative acknowledgement than people who are low in NFS.

H3: The effect of negative acknowledgement should be more effective as peoples' NFS increases.

In contrast, people who are low in NFS are not uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and are less susceptible to simple knowledge structures. They have a greater desire for evaluative accuracy. As a result, they are willing to go beyond an initial cue and a simple knowledge structure and consider alternative interpretations of the information. Therefore, people low in NFS should be less susceptible to the effects of the negative acknowledgement.

## EXPERIMENT 1

To test hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, we designed a restaurant menu that had a fairly limited offering and measured the impact of acknowledging this limitation on participants' evaluations of the menu, restaurant, and expected food quality. Based on the speculations of Ward and Brenner (2006) regarding highly evaluative contexts and the predictions of information integration theory (Anderson, 1981), we predicted that acknowledging that the menu was limited would have an impact on not only the evaluation of the menu, but also other related domains (restaurant and expected food quality). To investigate the possible mediating role of negative cognitive responses, we measured participants' positive, negative, and neutral thoughts associated with evaluating the menu. We predicted that negative acknowledgement would result in participants generating fewer negative thoughts and that this would result in more positive evaluations.

### Method

*Participants.* Sixty undergraduate students (36 males and 24 females) participated in partial fulfilment of a course experimental requirement. Participants were randomly assigned to the control condition or the negative acknowledgement condition.

*Procedure.* Via a questionnaire, participants were informed that a new restaurant was considering opening near campus and that they had put together a menu to try to appeal to college students. The menu was specifically designed to be short with limited options. Participants were presented

with the menu and asked to answer some questions. The core manipulation in the study was the inclusion (or not) of the negative acknowledgement in the instructions to review the menu. In the negative acknowledgement condition, the instructions included an additional statement that the menu was “small and limited.”

*Dependent measures.* Participants reported their evaluations of the menu, the restaurant, and food quality on a series of 7-point scales (very bad/very good; very unfavourable/very favourable; very negative/very positive, all  $\alpha$ 's > .93). Participants indicated their likelihood of eating at the new restaurant (not very likely/very likely) and adequacy of the menu items (not very adequate/very adequate).

Participants then completed a thought listing cognitive response measure (e.g., Calder, Insko, & Yandell, 1974; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). They were presented with a page containing 10 individual lines and given the instruction, “please list any thoughts you had about the menu. Please list only one thought per space below. It is not necessary to fill in all the spaces; just list as many thoughts as you had while looking at the menu.” Following the completion of the thought listing, they were asked to go back and rate each thought as being positive, negative, or neutral.

## Results and discussion

As displayed in Table 1, participants in the negative acknowledgement condition (vs. control) reported more positive evaluations of the menu ( $F(1,58) =$

TABLE 1  
Mean scores in negative acknowledgement condition and control condition

<i>Evaluation characteristic</i>	<i>Negative acknowledgement condition</i>		<i>Control condition</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Evaluation of menu	5.01 <sub>a</sub>	.89	4.42 <sub>b</sub>	1.08
Evaluation of restaurant	4.58 <sub>a</sub>	.80	4.00 <sub>b</sub>	.93
Evaluation of food	4.68 <sub>a</sub>	.94	4.03 <sub>b</sub>	1.25
Likelihood of eating at restaurant	5.03 <sub>a</sub>	1.10	4.10 <sub>b</sub>	1.73
Adequacy of menu	4.57 <sub>a</sub>	1.31	3.83 <sub>b</sub>	1.46
Negative thoughts	1.60 <sub>a</sub>	1.22	2.47 <sub>b</sub>	1.46
Positive thoughts	1.07	.87	.77	1.14
Neutral thoughts	1.40 <sub>a</sub>	1.45	.67 <sub>b</sub>	.80
Total thoughts	4.10	1.88	3.90	1.69

Means with differing subscripts within rows are significantly different at the .05 level.

5.32,  $MSE = .98$ ,  $p < .05$ ), restaurant ( $F(1,58) = 6.64$ ,  $MSE = .76$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and food ( $F(1,58) = 5.08$ ,  $MSE = 1.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Also, they reported that they were more likely to eat at the restaurant ( $F(1,58) = 6.23$ ,  $MSE = 2.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and that the items on the menu were more adequate ( $F(1,58) = 4.20$ ,  $MSE = 1.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These results support our expectations. Acknowledging that the menu was limited had a positive influence on not only the evaluation of the menu and its adequacy, but also the other related domains like the food and restaurant quality and the likelihood of eating at the restaurant.

Further, participants in the negative acknowledgement condition (vs. control) listed and rated fewer negative thoughts ( $M = 1.60$ ,  $SD = 1.22$  vs.  $M = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ;  $F(1,58) = 6.24$ ,  $MSE = 1.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and more neutral thoughts ( $M = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 1.45$  vs.  $M = .67$ ,  $SD = .80$ ;  $F(1,58) = 5.86$ ,  $MSE = 1.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while positive ( $M = 1.07$ ,  $SD = .87$  vs.  $M = .77$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) and total number of total thoughts ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.88$  vs.  $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ) did not differ ( $p$ 's  $> .25$ ). This indicates that negative cognitive response may be important to the underlying process of negative acknowledgement.

To confirm this, we tested the mediating effects of the number of negative thoughts on the various dependent variables using a bootstrapping analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) for estimating direct and indirect effects. The results indicated that the total effect of negative acknowledgement on all primary dependent variables (menu, restaurant, food, likely to eat, and adequacy) (total effect, all  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ) became non-significant when the number of negative thoughts was included in the model (direct effect, all  $p$ 's  $> .12$ ). These analyses revealed, with 95% confidence, that the total indirect effect of negative acknowledgement on all primary dependent variables through the mediator was significant. None of the confidence intervals included zero, indicating that the indirect effects were significant, confirming mediation. These results support our prediction, indicating that negative acknowledgement works through mitigating counterarguing.

## EXPERIMENT 2

To test hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3, we designed a study using a technical manual containing the features and installation of a digital sound system projector and measured the impact of acknowledging that the manual was technical and confusing on participants' evaluations of the manual and the sound system. We predicted that acknowledging that the manual was technical and confusing would have an impact on not only the evaluation of the manual, but also the sound system.

To investigate the moderating role of NFS, we used the 42-item NFCC scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) focusing specifically on the 27-item NFS



subscale. We predicted that people high in NFS (vs. low) would be more susceptible to the effects of a negative acknowledgement because a negative acknowledgement provides a simple knowledge structure and can be used to reduce ambiguity.

Also, Ward and Brenner (2006) point out, using negative acknowledgement can be risky. Using preemptive acknowledgement could prime a negative evaluation that would not have occurred otherwise. Another potential risk of negative acknowledgement is not delivering the acknowledgement in a clear way. A poorly delivered negative acknowledgement may not be understood as a negative acknowledgement at all. If the acknowledgement is not understood, then it should simply be disregarded and have no effect. Research has, however, indicated that a confusing statement can actually have a negative effect on evaluation (Kardes, Fennis, Hirt, Tormala, & Bullington, 2007). So, it is also possible that if a poorly delivered negative acknowledgement is perceived as confusing then it could backfire and result in a more negative evaluation than if none were given at all. Experiment 2 includes a condition in which the negative acknowledgement was difficult to understand to investigate if poor delivery could potentially have a damaging impact. Since we had no clear theoretically derived prediction, no formal hypothesis was developed.

## Method

*Participants.* A hundred and twenty-three undergraduate students (37 males and 86 females) participated in partial fulfilment of a course experimental requirement. Participants were randomly assigned to the control condition, the negative acknowledgement condition, or the unclear acknowledgement condition.

*Procedure.* When participants arrived, they were seated in individual cubicles. All experimental sessions were conducted on computers using Medialab software. The instructions, including the experimental manipulation, were delivered orally by the experimenter before the participants began the task. In the control condition, the only instructions given by the experimenter were: "We are going to show you an owner's manual for a Yamaha YSP-1000 Digital Sound System Projector and ask you some questions regarding the manual." In the negative acknowledgement condition, this was followed by, "This information is technical and confusing, and we are interested in understanding your comprehension of the owner's manual." In the unclear acknowledgement condition, the experimenter delivered exactly the same instructions as the negative acknowledgement condition, but said everything in a low mumble so that it was difficult to understand. Participants then

read through six pages from the owner's manual before completing the dependent measures and filling out the 42-item NFCC scale.

*Dependent measure.* Confusion about the manual was measured using two items, "While reading the owner's manual, I felt confused" and "While reading the owner's manual, I struggled to understand the information," both rated on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These two items were highly correlated ( $r(123) = .87, p < .001$ ) and were averaged to create a confusion index.

The attitude toward the product was captured by a measure of participants' overall evaluation and overall impression of the Yamaha YSP-1000 digital sound system projector, both rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely bad/extremely unfavourable) to 7 (extremely good/extremely favourable). These two items ( $r(123) = .71, p < .001$ ) were averaged to create an evaluation index.

Finally, participants were asked to report their prior knowledge about digital sound projectors and if they owned one. As a manipulation check for the unclear acknowledgement, they were also asked how well they understood the instructions (1 = very well; 7 = not at all).

## Results and discussion

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that treatment groups did not differ in terms of prior knowledge or ownership (both  $F_s < 1$ ). Also, an independent samples  $t$ -test indicated that participants understood the negative acknowledgement significantly better in the negative acknowledgement conditions ( $M = 1.67, SD = .88$ ) than in the unclear acknowledgement condition ( $M = 2.61, SD = 1.25$ ) ( $t(79) = 3.99, p < .001$ ), confirming the integrity of the unclear acknowledgement manipulation. The 27-item NFS scale showed high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The NFS score was mean-centred to be used as a continuous predictor in subsequent analysis.

*Confusion.* We performed a hierarchical regression (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) analysis on the confusion index using experimental condition and NFS score as predictors. We used effects coding for the different treatment conditions and created two vectors providing a direct contrast between the unclear acknowledgement and the control condition as well as a contrast between the negative acknowledgement and the control condition.

In the hierarchical regression analysis, the main effect terms were entered in step 1 and the two-way interactions were entered in step 2. The analysis revealed a main effect ( $\beta = -0.552, p < .01$ ) illustrating that participants reported more confusion in the unclear acknowledgement condition than the control condition. There was also a main effect ( $\beta = 0.551, p < .01$ )

showing that confusion was higher in the control condition than in the negative acknowledgement condition. Both these main effects were qualified by two significant interactions between NFS score and the experimental conditions ( $\beta$ 's =  $-0.018$  and  $.022$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ).

To decompose the interaction and aid in interpretation, we performed a spotlight analysis (Hayes & Matthes, 2009). A spotlight analysis at one standard deviation above the mean of NFS showed a significant difference such that high NFS participants were less confused by the manual in the negative acknowledgement condition than in the control condition ( $t(117) = 3.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while participants in the control condition were less confused by the manual than participants in the unclear acknowledgement condition ( $t(117) = 3.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ). At one standard deviation below the mean (low NFS), no significant differences were found across conditions ( $t$ 's  $< 1$ ).

These results support our expectations that negative acknowledgement reduces confusion, and that a poorly delivered negative acknowledgement can actually result in greater confusion than a situation in which no acknowledgement was given. These effects, however, only emerged for people high in NFS. People low in NFS were unaffected by both the negative acknowledgement and the poorly delivered acknowledgement.

*Product evaluation.* Consistent with the analysis of the confusion index, we submitted the product evaluation index to a hierarchical regression using the same effects coding. The main effects were entered at step 1. We found two significant main effects ( $\beta = 0.296$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\beta = -0.280$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Evaluations were higher in the control condition than in the unclear acknowledgement condition, and evaluations were higher in the negative acknowledgement condition than in the control condition. Entering the two-way interaction at step 2 revealed a significant interaction ( $\beta = 0.012$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

To decompose the interaction and aid in interpretation, we performed a spotlight analysis (Hayes & Matthes, 2009). A spotlight analysis at one standard deviation above the mean of NFS showed a significant difference such that high NFS participants had more positive overall evaluations of the product in the negative acknowledgement condition than in the control condition ( $t(117) = 3.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while participants in the control condition had more positive overall evaluations of the product than participants in the unclear acknowledgement condition ( $t(117) = 2.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ). At one standard deviation below the mean (low NFS), no significant differences were found across conditions ( $t$ 's  $< 1$ ).

These results support our expectations that negative acknowledgement improves evaluation, and that a poorly delivered negative acknowledgement can actually result in a poorer evaluation than if no acknowledgement was given. Again, it was only people high in NFS who demonstrated these

effects. People low in NFS were unaffected by both the negative acknowledgement and the poorly delivered acknowledgement.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Our results conceptually replicate the results of Ward and Brenner (2006), such that acknowledging a negative feature can lead consumers to be more lenient toward the negative feature. The presence of a negative acknowledgement resulted in more positive ratings of the negative quality in both experiments. Interestingly, the negative acknowledgement also resulted in higher overall evaluations of both the restaurant and the sound system. This extension of the effect beyond the specific domain of the acknowledgement (the menu or the manual) is an important addition to the findings of Ward and Brenner (2006). In their studies, the negative acknowledgement only impacted the specific domain that it addressed. Future research should further explore when this influence technique extends beyond the specific domain of the acknowledgement and when it does not.

Further, our studies also identify a key mediator and a key moderator to the effectiveness of negative acknowledgement. Experiment 1 shows the central role of counterarguing and illustrates how negative acknowledgement reduces negatively valenced cognitive responses. The ability to counterargue is crucial in resisting persuasion. It is likely that negative acknowledgement makes the communication appear more genuine and less biased.

In addition, study 2 shows that the negative acknowledgement only influenced consumers who are high in NFS. Apparently, a desire to avoid ambiguity and freeze on information that is useful (the negative acknowledgement) is necessary for the acknowledgement to be effective. People high in NFS have a preference for information that is readily accessible and can reduce uncertainty and ambiguity (the acknowledgement) and are more likely to use it in their evaluation.

The acknowledgement does not influence consumers who are low in NFS because they do not find ambiguity to be uncomfortable and are not focused on simple knowledge structures. People low in NFS are less concerned with order and predictability and are more willing to go beyond an initial cue and a simple knowledge structure and consider alternative interpretations of the information.

Further, the results of study 2 suggest that a poorly delivered negative acknowledgement can actually result in a poorer evaluation than if no acknowledgement was given. But, again this is the case only for people who are high in NFS. An unclear communication may create ambiguity and may actually delay judgement. People high in NFS would be more likely to find this ambiguity and delay uncomfortable, resulting in increased confusion and lower overall evaluations.

We would, however, like to acknowledge a limitation to the unclear acknowledgement results. We did not directly measure whether participants understood that the poorly delivered negative acknowledgement was actually a negative acknowledgement or not. As a result, the findings for the poorly delivered negative acknowledgement could be the result of either a lack of clarity in general or lack of clarity with specific regard to the negative acknowledgement. As a result, our findings could also suggest that any confusing statement could result in poorer evaluations. Future research can help clarify this possibility.

Another interesting question related to these studies concerns the source of the negative acknowledgement. In both of our experiments, the acknowledgement is imbedded in the instructions. As a result, it is implied that it is coming from the experimenter. Ward and Brenner (2006) use acknowledgements that are either imbedded in the instructions (study 1) or appear to come from the person being evaluated (study 2 and study 3). Given our theoretical account, there is no *a priori* reason why the source of the negative acknowledgement should differentially influence the effect. We posit that the negative acknowledgement works through reducing counterarguing. By implication, any source could make the acknowledgement and still produce the effect. This is however something that could be investigated in future research.

Further investigation of the negative acknowledgement effect in different marketing settings and testing potential moderators and mediators to gain a better understanding of the underlying processes should help shed some light on how the technique works, why it is effective, and what situations result in the greatest desired impact and which should be avoided. Although it has not been empirically tested, Ward and Brenner (2006) suggest that using negative acknowledgement in some situations might be risky. An acknowledgement may actually make salient a negative that would not have otherwise been noticed. Indeed, our study identifies one potential risk of using a negative acknowledgement. A poorly delivered acknowledgement can possibly exacerbate the reaction to a negative.

Future research should also investigate the effects of negative acknowledgement on dissatisfaction and regret in situations where the negative attribute would not be discovered until after purchase and use. Also, it may be especially interesting to compare negative acknowledgement to another influence technique like providing guarantees. Guarantees reduce resistance by reducing the perceived risk of purchase. Under what circumstances is it more beneficial to offer a guarantee and take the risk that consumers will discover the negative on their own or to acknowledge the negative upfront and not stress the guarantee?

Having a better understanding of these influence techniques is extremely important for both practitioners and consumers. These studies along with Ward and Brenner (2006) provide some initial empirical evidence for a somewhat novel impression management strategy. Theoretically gaining a better

understanding of the underlying processes driving the effect and comparing it to other influence techniques in situations relevant to practitioners and consumers should provide some interesting and exciting future research.

Manuscript received 27 February 2014

Revised manuscript received 20 June 2014

Revised manuscript accepted 23 June 2014

First published online 6 August 2014

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