

## **Consumers' Revision of Negative Initial Assessments of Marketing Targets**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In two experiments, we examine consumers' ability to revise their negative initial assessment of a marketing target. In particular, we look at the role of two factors – cognitive load on the consumer while assessing the target and the implicit theory (incremental vs. entity theory) the consumer holds about the malleability of things in general. In Study 1, we show that revising one's initial assessment is a resource-consuming task that can be impaired by cognitive load. In Study 2, we show that the malleability of the initial assessment as a result of the implicit theory the consumer holds moderates the effect of cognitive load on the revision of the initial assessment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Consumers frequently make assessments of marketing targets – products, advertisements, salespeople, retail stores, etc. (Folkes, 1987; Kardes, 1994; Kim, Park, and Schwarz, 2010). In some cases, consumers make initial assessments of those targets and retain that assessment while in other cases, they subsequently revise those initial assessments, sometimes within a few seconds or minutes (Campbell & Kirmani 2000; Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull, 1988). From a marketer's standpoint, they would like consumers to hold on to their initial positive evaluation whereas they would like them to revise initial negative assessments. It is in the best interest of the consumer that they form assessments that are based on information rather on just heuristics, which are often the basis of quick initial assessments (Kardes, 1993; Kardes, Posavac, and Cronley, 2004; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Little is known about what can enhance versus deter the consumer's ability to revise their initial assessment. In this research, we identify two factors that may enhance or prevent one from revising their initial assessment of such targets.

Research in the consumer context has shown that consumer are relatively less able to correct initial assessments when they are under cognitive load (Kahneman, 2003). Intuitive sense on making judgments and judgment revision suggest that when the consumer is an active recipient of information

(versus a passive recipient) pertaining to the target being evaluated, the information is more likely to be utilized in making assessments due to greater comprehension and/or elaboration (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Keller and Staelin 1987; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Trendel et al. (2018) found that cognitive load did not impact attitude change among consumers who watched advertising imagery. However, there is also research that points to the contrary. Krugman (1965), in his seminal paper, suggested that actively processing television commercials results in counterargumentation and hence, less persuasion. Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull (1988), in the context of person judgments, demonstrate that when the perceiver is in a state of cognitive busyness (i.e., cognitively loaded), they are less able to revise their initial judgments of a target person. Campbell and Kirmani (2000) found that cognitive busyness, being resource-consuming, can prevent persuasion knowledge from being accessed. Research by Johar and Simmons (2000), in the context of use of product disclosure information, suggests that when cognitive capacity is constrained, it prevents use of concurrent information in forming product assessments. The latter set of studies point to the finding that cognitive load prevents integration of the information in the assessment process.

Another factor that could be an enhancer or deterrent to consumers' ability to revise initial assessments of marketing targets is the implicit theory they hold about whether things around them are static vs. dynamic. Specifically, Dweck (1986) and her colleagues studied people's theories on aspects such as intelligence, educational performance, morality, or personality and distinguished between *incremental theorists* (who believe things are dynamic and malleable) and *entity theorists* (who believe things are static and rigid). A number of studies by Dweck and her associates (see Dweck 2000 for a review) have shown that those with an entity theory (also known as fixed mindset) are more likely to make stereotypical assessments from limited social information and not update those initial assessments, even when they encounter stereotype-inconsistent information. In contrast, those with an incremental theory (also known as growth mindset), who believe that things are not static, are mor

likely to update their initial stereotypical assessments and instead base their evaluations on a variety of available information (Erdley and Dweck 1993). In a consumption context for instance, Puente-Díaz and Cavazos-Arroyo (2019) showed that consumers with a growth mindset were more likely to give a product another try after an initial negative experience whereas those with a fixed mindset were less forgiving. Hong et al. (2022) found that differences between incremental and entity theorists in the coping strategies chosen to mitigate health-related stress. Likewise, Carnevale et al. (2017) examined the responses of consumers to advertisements and found that those with a growth mindset, in comparison to those with a fixed mindset, reacted more positively to meaningful advertisements rather than happy advertisements.

We conducted two studies to examine the role of cognitive load and implicit theory to revise initial assessments of a marketing target. The purpose of Study 1 is identify whether cognitive load is indeed debilitating in revising initial assessments. We use the context of a customer-salesperson interaction to examine consumers' assessments of marketing targets wherein a consumer is forming an assessment of a salesperson during the interaction. Specifically, we enable an initial assessment by having consumers watch a stereotypical used car salesman deliver his sales pitch. We operationalize cognitive load by having consumers think of questions to ask the salesperson during the interaction. After first establishing that a questioning mindset increases cognitive load, which impairs the ability of the consumer to revise their initial assessment of the salesperson, in Study 2, we ascertain for which individuals a questioning mindset is indeed debilitating. Specifically, we identify that consumers' implicit theory (Dweck 1996) moderates the effect of cognitive load on the ability to revise initial assessments. Specifically, we show that those consumers with an *incremental* theory of personality are able to overcome the debilitating effects of cognitive load and revise their initial assessments of the salesperson whereas those with an *entity* theory retain their initial assessment.

This paper makes two specific contributions. First, we extend prior work on use of information in judgment formation (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Johar and Simmons 2000; Kardes 1986; Muthukrishnan and Ramaswami 1999; Sujan, Bettman, and Sujan 1986) by examining the role of cognitive load in consumers' ability to revise their initial assessments. Second, it has been argued in the literature that actively processing persuasive information can result in the lack of integration of the information into judgment (Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988; Johar and Simmons 2000; Krugman 1965). We demonstrate that this depends on the implicit theory the consumer holds, which in turn impacts how malleable the initial assessment is; when the initial assessment is malleable, revision of the initial assessment is possible.

### **REVISION OF INITIAL ASSESSMENTS UNDER COGNITIVE LOAD**

Quattrone (1982) and Trope (1986) propose that perceiving a target consists of an initial assessment (characterization) phase followed by a correction phase. Based on this model, Gilbert and his associates (Gilbert, Krull, and Pelham 1988; Gilbert and Osborne 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988) showed that forming an initial assessment of a target is automatic and requires very little resources; however, correcting the initial assessment is controlled and therefore, resource-consuming. While cognitive busyness adversely impacts the controlled correction phase, the characterization phase, being automatic, is unaffected.

Gilbert's findings have received support in the consumer behavior literature. Using a salesperson evaluation context, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) showed that cognitively loaded participants, not having the cognitive capacity to access persuasion knowledge, had more positive evaluations of the salesperson. Their findings are consistent with the propositions of Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999) who, in an integrative framework of persuasion theories, suggest three conditions that must be satisfied for consumers to revise their initial assessments: 1) the consumer must recognize a potential biasing source (Schwarz and Close 1983), 2) the consumer must have a naïve theory of why,

how, and to what extent the biasing source has influenced the initial judgment (Petty and Wegener 1993), and 3) the consumer must have the cognitive resources to do the above (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990). If any of these conditions is not met, the initial judgment remains intact. Although Campbell and Kirmani (2000) did consider the consumer being an active recipient of the information, we add to their research by investigating the moderating role of implicit theories on the effect of cognitive load on judgment revision. Moreover, we specifically examine initial versus final assessments rather than only final assessments.

Based on research by Gilbert and his colleagues (Gilbert, Krull, and Pelham 1988; Gilbert and Osborne 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988), we posit that when consumers encounter a salesperson, they form an automatic initial assessment of the salesperson based on extant stereotypes that can be triggered by the product that the salesperson is selling and/or physical appearance. As forming an initial assessment is automatic and doesn't require much cognitive resources (Devine 1989), it doesn't matter whether the consumer has a questioning mindset (active recipient) or not. Subsequently, consumers may revise their initial assessment based on the salesperson's behavior if a revision is called for (Quattrone 1982; Trope 1986). For example, when a customer encounters a used car salesman who looks stereotypical, we propose that it triggers a stereotype of being sales-oriented and pushy, and results in a relatively negative initial assessment. Nevertheless, if the salesperson's behavior is inconsistent with this initial assessment (e.g., if the salesperson is customer-oriented), recognizing the positive behavior should result in a assessment revision in a positive direction. Suppose the consumer, expecting to be persuaded, is "on guard" and therefore, has a questioning mindset. We propose that thinking of questions during an interaction is a resource-consuming task that may leave little or no spare cognitive capacity for revising the initial assessment of the salesperson. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

**H1:** When a salesperson's behavior is inconsistent with the initial assessment, consumers who are not cognitively loaded during the interaction revise their initial assessments of the salesperson. Those under cognitive load do not.

It could be argued that thinking of questions to ask the salesperson results in distraction and takes the consumer's attention away from the salesperson. On the contrary, an activity such as formulating questions based on the sales pitch requires attention to the sales pitch (behavior). Therefore, we do not expect such consumers to be able to recall any less of the salesperson's behavior compared to consumers who listen to the salesperson's pitch passively.

The following study was conducted to examine our hypothesis.

### **STUDY 1**

In this study, cognitively loaded consumers' (those consumers with a questioning mindset) ability to integrate information to revise their initial assessment of a salesperson was measured. We enabled the initial assessment by having participants watch a video of a salesperson greeting them.

To identify the type of salesperson to use for our studies, we conducted a pretest to identify commonly held salesperson stereotypes and the behaviors associated with them. Using a free elicitation procedure for measuring schemas for personality types as used by Sujan et al. (1986) and Cantor and Mischel (1979), we asked 80 undergraduate marketing students at a large northeastern university to think of salespeople who left a negative impression on them. They were then asked to report (1) the product categories these salespeople sell, (2) their appearance, and (3) their persuasion strategies. The product categories participants most frequently associated with negatively perceived salespeople were cars (48% of the respondents listed this), electronics (24%), and clothing (24%). These results are consistent with those of Sujan et al. (1986). The appearance cues participants most frequently associated with negatively perceived salespeople were poorly dressed (35%), sloppy (24%), and slick hair (23%). The influence strategies most frequently associated with negatively perceived salespeople were

pushy (46%), sales-oriented (26%), and overbearing (24%). In contrast, the influence strategies most frequently associated with positively perceived salespeople were provides information/alternatives (49%), helpful (24%), and customers' need-oriented (20%). These differences in influence strategies are consistent with the suggestion of Saxe and Weitz (1982) that sales-oriented behavior is perceived negatively whereas customer-oriented behavior is perceived positively.

Based on the pretest results, we chose the "used car salesman" for our studies, being the most commonly held stereotype. In this study, participants were asked to imagine that they are in the process of buying a used car and are approached by a salesperson during a visit to a dealership. The stereotype was triggered by showing participants a used car salesman greeting them. We used a video of a salesperson as opposed to in-person for the sake of consistency across participants. Since the pretest indicated that the used car salesman stereotype would lead to an anticipation of pushy, sales-oriented, and overbearing behavior, we designed his sales pitch (behavior) to be informative, helpful, and customer-oriented so as to challenge the initial assessment (Appendix A). These were behaviors associated with positively perceived salespeople as per our pretest.

To confirm this, a second pretest was conducted with 30 participants drawn from the same population. On a 1 to 7 bipolar scale (Very Negative to Very Positive), half the participants indicated the behavior they expected from a used car salesman and the other half read the sales pitch and evaluated the used car salesman's behavior. Results showed that relative to the initial expectation, the behavior of the salesperson was perceived positively (2.13 vs. 5.60;  $t(28) = 14.92, p < .001$ ).

A video clip of the sales pitch was created using a used car salesman. The clip was prepared by having him talk to the camera just as if he were talking to a customer. He was instructed to go about showing cars and using physical gestures as he normally would. By this, it would appear to viewers that the salesperson was talking to them. For further reality, we dubbed his voice with that of a theater actor so that it sounded natural and unrehearsed.



## **Procedure**

In a 2 x 2 between-subjects design, sixty-seven undergraduate marketing students were randomly assigned to either a high or low cognitive load condition and made their evaluations of the salesperson either right after viewing his initial greeting (initial assessment) or only at the end of the sales pitch (final assessment).

## **Cognitive Load Manipulation**

Cognitive Load was manipulated by instructing participants to think of two questions to ask the salesperson while listening to him, based on the information he gave them. We expected that thinking of questions while listening to the salesperson would induce cognitive busyness, because the participants would have to attend to what the salesperson was saying to be able to ask relevant questions. As the sales pitch was only 60 sec. long, we felt that having to think of two questions was a reasonable demand on participants' cognitive effort. These participants were told that at the end of the interaction with the salesperson they would be asked to write down the two questions that they had thought of.

*Assessment.* Half the participants completed the dependent measures right after the initial greeting of the salesperson (initial assessment) whereas the other half indicated their responses only at the end of the sales pitch (final assessment).

Using seven-point Likert scale items, participants evaluated the salesperson along six traits—customer's need-oriented, dishonest, knowledgeable, pushy, friendly, and helpful. These traits are important in customer-salesperson interactions (Leigh and Summers 2002; Weitz 1981) and were the most commonly mentioned in the pretest as attributes along which customers evaluate salespeople. These traits are also consistent with those proposed by Hawes, Rao and Baker (1993) as attributes on which consumers evaluate salespeople in retail settings. In addition to evaluating along these six traits, participants indicated their overall impression of the salesperson on a seven-point bipolar scale (1=Very

Negative; 7=Very Positive). Following these measures, participants were asked to list thoughts (up to six) they had while listening to the salesperson.

At the end, the two final assessment groups were given a recall task that tested them on details of the sales pitch. As we were particularly interested in testing whether the high cognitive load recipients had encoded the positive behavior of the salesperson (i.e., information that challenged the initial assessment), the recall task consisted of five open-ended questions (e.g., Did he offer to show you any other cars?) pertaining to statements made by the salesperson that reflected positive behavior. Given that the salesperson spoke for only 60 sec., we believe that five questions covered aspects of the sales pitch adequately. The responses of each participant were scored and totaled by two independent judges. Each participant could receive a score ranging from 0 to 10 points. Any disagreements were resolved by discussion.

### **Analysis and Results**

Following an exploratory factor analysis and reliability check, the six trait items and the overall impression measure were averaged into one composite salesperson evaluation index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed with the salesperson evaluation index as the dependent variable and cognitive load (high vs. low) and assessment (initial vs. final) as independent variables. The results revealed significant main effects for listening ( $F(1, 56) = 8.78, p < .01$ ) and assessment condition ( $F(1, 56) = 12.23, p < .001$ ), qualified by a significant interaction ( $F(1, 56) = 7.11, p < .01$ ). As per hypothesis 1, the effect of assessment (initial vs. final) was significant only in the case of low cognitive load participants and not for high cognitive load, that is, those with a low cognitive load revised their initial assessment, but those who were cognitively loaded thinking of questions did not (Figure 1). A comparison of means showed that the low cognitive load participants' final assessment was significantly different from the other three cell means.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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To distinguish cognitive load from distraction, we examined whether the two groups of participant varied in the attention they had paid to the salesperson. An analysis of the recall scores indicated recall of the sales pitch was high and equally good in both final assessment groups with no significant difference ( $M_{\text{high}} = 7.33$ ,  $M_{\text{low}} = 7.87$ ;  $t(28) = .82$ ,  $p = .42$ ). This lack of difference indicates that those under high cognitive load encoded the salesperson's positive behavior, but simply did not integrate that information to revise their initial assessments as much as those under low cognitive load.

The results of this study indicate that although both high and low cognitive load groups had similar initial assessments of the salesperson. However, those under a low cognitive load were able to integrate the salesperson's positive behavior to form more positive final assessments of the salesperson. The product and the salesperson's appearance were designed to prime a stereotype and the salesperson's behavior challenged this stereotype. It could be expected that participants would recognize the inconsistency and integrate this information to revise their initial assessment in a positive direction. Nevertheless, we had hypothesized that the lack the cognitive resources required to integrate the information and make a revision would render consumers from doing so. Our hypothesis was supported.

Are there conditions under which despite a high cognitive load, some consumers can indeed revise their initial assessments? In the next study, we examine one such contingency – the implicit theory held by the consumer.

## STUDY 2

Research in social psychology by Dweck and her associates (Chiu, Hong, and Dweck 1997; Dweck 1996; Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 1995; Dweck and Leggett 1988; Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck 1998) has shown that an individual's assessment of a target is influenced by the implicit theory that person has about people's personality. Dweck has posited that everyone holds a theory, with varying magnitude, on

the extent to which a person's personality is likely to change. Those with an *entity theory* believe that personality consists of fixed, static traits and people are inherently made in a certain way that cannot be changed. On the other hand, those with an *incremental theory* believe that personality consists of dynamic personal qualities that can be changed and developed.

We posit that consumers with an incremental theory hold a relatively malleable first assessment of the marketing target that can be revised relatively easily, in comparison to consumers with an entity theory. Specifically, we propose that incremental theorists require fewer cognitive resources to revise their initial assessment and so are able to revise despite being under relatively high cognitive load. In the context of the customer forming an assessment of the salesperson, we hypothesize:

- H2:** When a salesperson's behavior is inconsistent with the initial assessment, high cognitive load consumers with an incremental theory of personality revise their assessments of the salesperson (integrate information). Those with an entity theory do not.

### **Implicit Theory Manipulation**

Past research has shown that implicit theories can be manipulated (Chiu et al. 1997; Hong et al. 1999; Levy et al. 1998; Plaks et al. 2001). For example, Hong et al. (1999) and Plaks et al. (2001) used fictitious magazine articles that presented the theory with vast amount of supporting evidence to induce the implicit theory. They demonstrated that the articles are successful in leading participants to adopt the presented theory, at least temporarily. We used the same articles for this study.

Prior to reading the article, each participant completed a four-item measure of his or her implicit theory (from Levy et al. 1998). This scale was embedded among several other scales ostensibly as part of another study that also served as a distraction task. Following this, each participant was given the three-page article to read that either argued for the entity or incremental theory. After reading it at their own pace, they again completed the four-item implicit theory measure that served as the manipulation check.

## Procedure

One hundred and forty-five marketing undergraduate students were randomly assigned to the six experimental conditions. Following initial instructions, participants were provided the fictitious magazine article. After reading it, participants viewed on a computer screen the salesperson deliver his sales pitch. The cognitive load manipulation, sales pitch, measurement instrument, dependent measures, and recall task were kept the same as those in Study 1. The two initial assessment control groups (one in each theory condition) completed the dependent measures soon after the salesperson's initial greeting. The four final assessment groups (high vs. low cognitive load x entity vs. incremental) completed them only after the salesperson had delivered his sales pitch.

## Analysis and Results

The four items of the pre- and post-article implicit theory measures were averaged respectively (Cronbach's alpha = .83 (pre) and .89 (post)). A comparison of the post-measures indicated a significant effect of article ( $M_{\text{entity}} = 3.49$ ,  $M_{\text{incremental}} = 4.62$ ;  $t(133) = 5.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ; higher mean indicates greater agreement with incremental theory) although there was no significant difference between the two groups prior to reading the article ( $M_{\text{entity}} = 4.35$ ,  $M_{\text{incremental}} = 4.13$ ;  $t(133) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .31$ )

As in the previous study, the seven salesperson evaluation items were averaged into one composite index (Cronbach's alpha = .85). An ANOVA on the composite index with the listening (initial, low cognitive load-final, or high cognitive load-final) and theory (incremental vs. entity) as independent variables showed a significant main effect of cognitive load ( $F(2, 129) = 22.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ) qualified by a significant interaction ( $F(2, 129) = 4.34$ ,  $p < .02$ ). There was no significant difference in the initial assessments of the two theory conditions ( $M_{\text{entity}} = 3.17$ ,  $M_{\text{incremental}} = 2.95$ ;  $t(44) = .86$ ,  $p = .39$ ). Planned comparisons showed that low cognitive load consumers in both theory conditions had final assessments that were significantly more positive than their corresponding initial assessments ( $M_{\text{entity}} = 4.60$  vs.  $3.17$ ,  $t(44) = 5.01$ ;  $M_{\text{incremental}} = 4.08$  vs.  $2.95$ ,  $t(45) = 4.14$ , both  $p < .001$ ). As predicted, high cognitive load

participants in the incremental theory condition had final assessments that were significantly different from the initial assessment (3.92 vs. 2.95,  $t(39) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This shows that high cognitive load participants holding an incremental theory of people's personality, having malleable initial assessments, are able to use the salesperson's behavior information to revise their assessments. As can be seen in Figure 2, there was no significant difference between the initial and final assessments of high cognitive load participants in the entity theory condition (3.17 vs. 3.32,  $t(45) = .56$ ,  $p = .58$ ), indicating they failed to revise their initial assessments whereas those in the incremental theory condition did revise their initial assessment. There was no difference in the final assessments of the high and low cognitive load participants in the incremental theory condition ( $M_{\text{high}} = 3.92$ ;  $M_{\text{low}} = 4.08$ ,  $t(44) = .58$ ,  $p = .56$ ).

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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Analyses of recall scores were conducted both by listening and theory conditions. As in study 1, recalls were scored by two independent judges and disagreements resolved by discussion. The ANOVA of recall showed no significant main effects for cognitive load ( $M_{\text{high}} = 7.24$ ,  $M_{\text{low}} = 6.45$ ;  $F(1, 85) = 1.92$ ,  $p = .17$ ) or theory ( $M_{\text{entity}} = 7.10$ ,  $M_{\text{incremental}} = 6.57$ ;  $F(1, 85) = .74$ ,  $p = .39$ ), and no significant interaction ( $F(1, 85) = .26$ ,  $p = .62$ ). This suggests that high cognitive load participants in the entity theory condition noticed and remembered the salesperson's behavior just as much as participants in other final assessment conditions, but failed to integrate this information into the final assessments as much as the other participants did.

In this study, further to replicating the results obtained in study 1, we showed that the implicit theory that one holds about people's personality moderates the impact of cognitive load on revision of the initial assessment. Initial assessments, being an automatic and almost instantaneous process, is unaffected by the implicit theory whereas the process of revision requiring controlled processing is.

Our results suggest that when the initial assessment is malleable (when the consumer has an incremental theory), high cognitive load recipients are able to overcome the debilitating effects of cognitive load and integrate information to revise an initial assessment. On the other hand, when the initial assessment is rigid (when the consumer has an entity theory), such integration does not occur. We argue that when the initial assessment is rigid, substantial cognitive resources are necessary in order to do the processing necessary to revise it. High cognitive load participants do not have such resources available. However, when they have an incremental theory, the initial assessment is relatively malleable and so can be revised even with few cognitive resources. Low cognitive load recipients, on the other hand, have substantial cognitive resources available and so are able to revise their initial assessment, regardless of whether it is malleable or rigid.

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

This research examined the ability of consumers to revise their initial assessments of marketing targets while cognitively loaded during an interaction with the salesperson. The findings presented suggest that although consumers, when cognitively loaded, can fail to use information for revising their initial assessment, being cognitively loaded is not always debilitating. In particular, we showed that the dysfunctional effect of cognitive load on ability to integrate information into assessment is moderated by the malleability of the initial assessment. Our results support the cognitive busyness paradigm (Gilbert, Krull, and Pelham 1988; Gilbert and Osborne 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988) that mere encoding of a persuasive message and being able to recall it does little for information integration in judgment-making unless consumers have sufficient cognitive resources. We go beyond the cognitive busyness tenet by suggesting that when resources are insufficient, integration is still possible, given the mindset to revise (incremental theory).

Our research has several important implications for marketers. While it may be impossible for marketers to instill an incremental theory in all consumers, whether the consumer is cognitively loaded or

not is relatively more controllable by the marketer. For example, in the context of a customer-salesperson interaction, one strategy could be to present the consumer with a written “FAQ” containing the most commonly asked questions with answers pertaining to the product. Another one could be for the salesperson to allow enough “silent time” during the sales pitch so that consumers can think of questions while the salesperson has paused, instead of having to listen and think at the same time. Although salespeople have no control over the implicit theory of personality that the consumer carries, it is crucial for salespeople to reduce the cognitive load of the consumer. Similarly, in contexts such as advertising. If too much information is provided in the ads, that renders the consumer cognitively loaded and possible unable to revise their initial impressions of the product advertised if they are entity theorists. This, of course, can work in the favor the marketer if the initial assessment is more positive than justified.

Our research has implications for the consumer as well. The inability to correct an incorrect first assessment has costs. Despite a good offering, consumers may reject an offering and choose to look elsewhere, adding to the time they spend on shopping. Lehman (1999) points out that time is getting more and more scarce, to the point that for some consumers time is far more important than money. Therefore, it is important for consumers to recognize that being cognitively loaded while paying attention to marketing stimuli can have negative consequences and take measures to be relatively passive during the interaction or work toward adopting an incremental theory of life.

We examined the process of assessment formation and revision only when the behavior was positive relative to the initial assessment. One can easily imagine marketing stimuli where the initial assessment is positive and the subsequent behavior is negative (e.g., Sujan et al. 1986). Although we believe our results will hold in this case also, further investigation is necessary before our findings can be generalized to all marketing situations.



**APPENDIX A****STUDY 1 SALES PITCH**

*"Hi ! Can I help you ?"*

(only participants in the final assessment conditions got the remainder of the sales pitch).

(text informs participants that the salesperson listened carefully while they explained what they were looking for and then says...)

*"We have several cars that you can look at. From what you've told me, I think you'll find one that matches your need.*

*Look at this one for example. This car's got 80,000 miles on it. (participants were shown car)*

*The engine's in good condition and has a three-month warranty.*

*The brakes and tires are almost new.*

*And, it's priced at \$ 4,999.*

*This car is good value for your money, but we do have less expensive cars.*

*If you'll walk over here with me, I'll show you some others.*

*You may want to test drive ones that you like to see how they run."*

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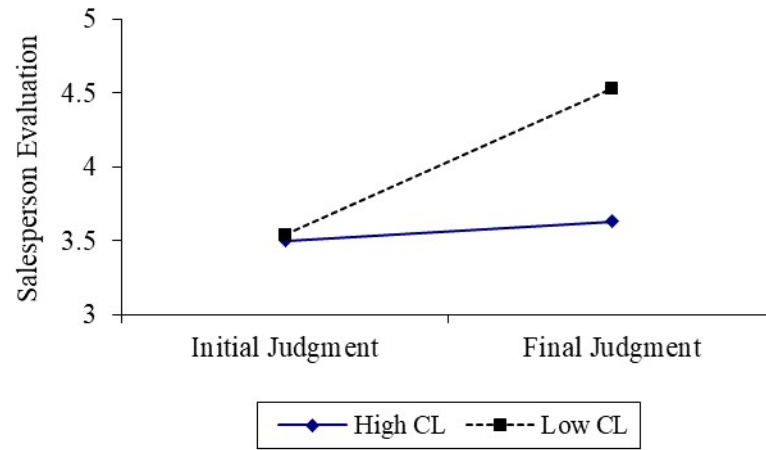
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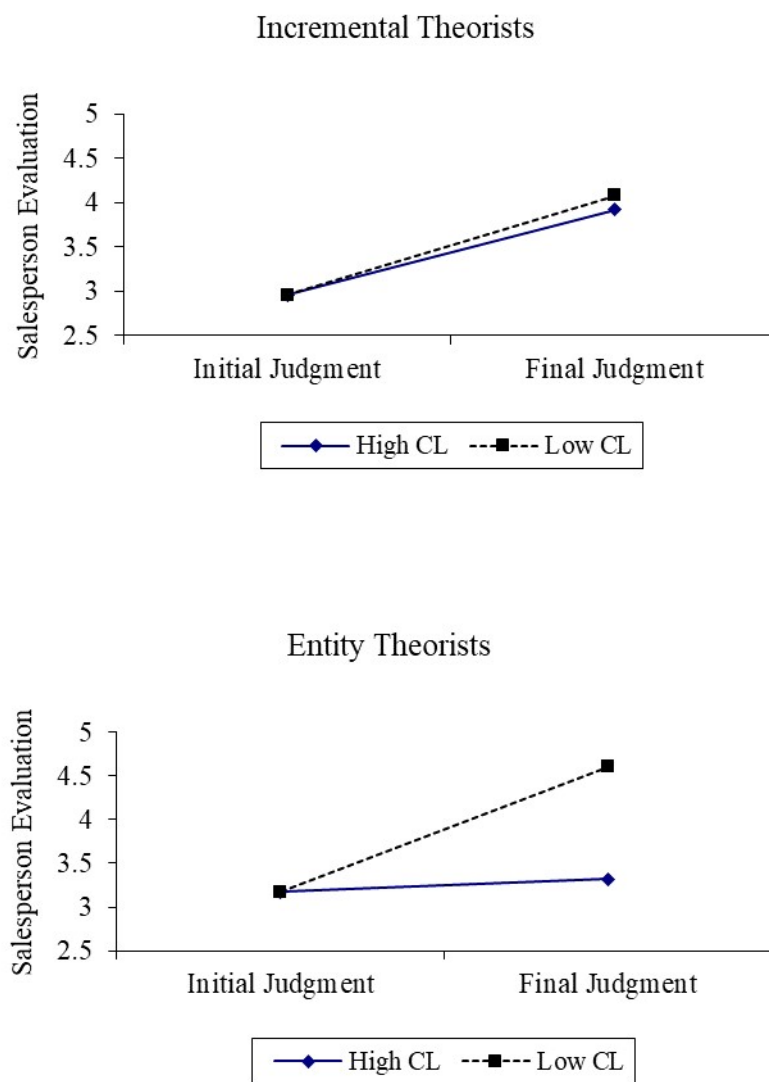
FIGURE 1

## STUDY 1: EVALUATION OF SALESPERSON BY HIGH AND LOW COGNITIVE LOAD PARTICIPANTS



\* Dependent measures were on a 7-point scale.

FIGURE 2

**STUDY 2: EVALUATION OF SALESPERSON BY HIGH AND LOW COGNITIVE LOAD PARTICIPANTS (BY THEORY CONDITION)**

\* Dependent measures were on a 7-point scale.