

# ALISON JING XU

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## EDUCATION

### **Ph.D., Marketing, 2008 - 2010 (Expected)**

College of Business  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)  
Advisor: Robert S. Wyer, Jr.

### **Doctoral Studies, Marketing, 2004 - 2008**

School of Business and Management  
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)  
Advisor: Robert S. Wyer, Jr.

### **B.A., English and International Business, Minor in Economics, 1999 - 2003**

School of International Business  
Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

## HONORS AND AWARDS

- Sheth-Sudman Award for Excellence in Research, UIUC, 2009.
- Richard D. and Anne Marie Irwin Fellowship, UIUC, 2009 - 2010.
- Summer Workshop on Decision Neuroscience, Selected Student Participant, University of Michigan, August 2009.
- Haring Symposium Representative (Presenter), Indiana University, March 2009.
- Winner, The Franco Nicosia ACR Best Competitive Paper Award, Association for Consumer Research, October 2008.
- John M. Jones Fellowship, UIUC, 2008 – 2009.
- Winner, PhD Student Research Paper Competition, School of Business and Management, HKUST, May 2008.
- Doctoral Studentship, HKUST, 2004 – 2008.

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Cognitive and Motivational Determinants of Mind-sets
- Judgment and Decision Processes
- Inference Processes

## PUBLICATIONS (see Appendix for abstracts)

- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (forthcoming), “The Impact of Puffery in Advertisements: The Role of Media Context, Communication Norms, and Consumer Knowledge,” *Journal of Consumer Research*.
- Muthukrishnan, A.V., Luc Wathieu and Alison Jing Xu (forthcoming), “Ambiguity Aversion and the Power of Established Brand,” *Management Science*.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2008), “The Comparative Mind-set: From Animal Comparisons to Increased Purchase Intentions,” *Psychological Science*, Vol.19 (Sept.), 859-864.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2007), “The Effect of Mind-sets on Consumer Decision Strategies,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34 (Dec.), 556-566.

## WORKING PAPERS (see Appendix for abstracts)

### Submitted

- Xu, Alison Jing, Rami Zwick and Norbert Schwarz, “Washing Away Your (Good or Bad) Luck: Superstition, Embodiment, and Gambling Behavior,” revising for resubmission to *Psychological Science* (equal contribution).
- Uskul, Ayse K., Daphna Oyserman, Norbert Schwarz, Spike W.S. Lee and Alison Jing Xu, “Culture and Question Format: Rating Scale Use in Cultures of Honor, Modesty, and Enhancement,” under 1<sup>st</sup> round review in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

### **In Preparation**

- Wyer, Robert S., Alison Jing Xu and Hao Shen, “Deliberative and Automatic Effects of Past Behavior on Future Goal-Directed Activity.”
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer, “An Acquisition Mind-set: Cognitive Consequences of Appetitive Motivation.”
- Xu, Alison Jing and A.V. Muthukrishnan, “A Paradox: Why Consumers Choose Coupons But Are Happier with Free Gifts.”
- Xu, Alison Jing and Dolores Albarracin, “Space and General Action Goals”.
- Xu, Alison Jing, Shirley Y.Y. Cheng, and Tiffany W. White, “Self-brand Connection, Brand Attack Induced Threat, and Goal Pursuit.”

### **RESEARCH IN PROGRESS**

- “Power, Impulsivity, and Self-control,” (with Sharon Shavitt).
- “Power and a Durability Mind-set,” (with Sharon Shavitt and Derek Rucker).
- “Televisions, Radios, and Mind-sets”.
- “Quality Inferences of Counterfeit Products,” (with Norbert Schwarz).

### **DISSERTATION**

#### **“Mind the Mind-sets: The Influences of Procedure Accessibility on Consumer Decision Making, Acquisition Intentions and Effectiveness of Persuasion”**

Chair: Robert S. Wyer, Jr.

Committee Members: Sharon Shavitt, Rashmi Adaval, Dolores Albarracin, Norbert Schwarz

Dissertation proposal was defended on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

A behavioral mind-set refers to the effect of performing a behavior in one situation (e.g., comparing which animals jump higher, dolphins or sea lions) on the likelihood of performing a conceptually similar behavior in subsequent, unrelated situations (e.g., comparing which chocolate candies are more attractive, M&Ms or Hershey’s kisses). It reflects the activation and persistence of procedural

knowledge. My dissertation circumscribes the construct of a behavioral mind-set and proposes a theoretical framework describing how mind-sets operate as well as their cognitive and motivational determinants. Empirically, three sets of studies investigate the role of mind-sets in different domains.

The first set of studies explored the influence of making comparative judgments on subsequent decision making. Specifically, I found that making comparative judgment in one situation activates a *which-to-buy* mind-set that increases consumers' willingness to choose which of several products to purchase in a later situation without considering the option of not buying anything at all. As a result, they are more likely to make a purchase than otherwise. This mind-set can be activated not only by stating preferences for one of two products but also by comparing the relative attractiveness of wild animals, comparing the animals with respect to physical attributes, and estimating how similar one object is to another. Furthermore, the mind-set, once activated, influences not only purchase intentions in hypothetical situations but also the actual decisions to purchase one of different types of products that are on sale after the experiment.

The second set of studies distinguishes between the influence of motivation on consumer behavior and the influence of a mind-set that is activated by this motivation. Specifically, I found that appetitive motivation, which naturally increases people's tendency to acquire food products, can give rise to a cognitively based *acquisition* mind-set that increases people's disposition to acquire non-food products as well. This acquisition mind-set may persist even when the appetitive motivation that gave rise to it is satiated by eating. Moreover, the disposition to acquire non-food products is not mediated by the products' attractiveness. The studies suggest that motivation and mind-sets may independently influence consumers' evaluation of a product and their intention to acquire it. Motivation is more likely to influence product evaluations whereas a mind-set is more likely to influence consumers' acquisition intentions.

The third research is still in progress. I am interested in investigating whether generating supportive elaborations or counterarguments in one situation will influence the tendency to engage in similar behavior in a subsequent, unrelated situation. First, I propose that making supportive elaborations in one situation will give rise to a *supportive elaboration* mind-set that, once activated, increases people's disposition to generate supportive thoughts in response to persuasive communications such as commercial advertisements or donation appeals that they receive later and, therefore, increases the effectiveness of persuasion. Correspondingly, counterarguing in an initial situation will activate a *counterargument* mind-set that increases the tendency to argue against the

persuasion contents and decreases its effectiveness. Two studies supported these possibilities.

Second, these mind-sets may influence people's response to not only the information that they receive from an external source but also the information that they generate themselves: for example, their initial behavioral intentions. That is, inducing a supportive elaboration mind-set may lead people to generate arguments in favor of their initial behavioral intentions and to engage in behaviors that are highly consistent with these intentions. Correspondingly, inducing a counterargument mind-set may lead people to generate thoughts against their initial behavioral intentions and decrease the likelihood of acting on these intentions. Two studies are planned to test these hypotheses.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2009), "The Impact of Fluff in Advertisements: The Role of Communication Norms and Consumer Knowledge," presented at the Haring Symposium, Indiana University.
- Xu, Alison Jing, Rami Zwick and Norbert Schwarz (2009), "Washing Away Luck: Implications for Beliefs in Winning", presented at the Society for Consumer Psychology Conference (poster session), February, San Diego, California.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2008), "The Comparative Mind-set: From Animal Comparisons to Increased Purchase Intentions," presented at the Association for Consumer Research Conference (competitive paper), October, San Francisco, California.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2007), "The Effect of Communication Norms on Interpretations of Meaningless Information," presented at the Association for Consumer Research Conference (competitive paper), October, Memphis, Tennessee.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2007), "Communication Norms in Consumer Context: Responses to Norm Deviations," presented at the Society for Consumer Psychology Summer Conference (competitive paper), August, San Francisco, California.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2007), "The Effect of Communication

Norms on Interpretations of Two-sided Communication,” presented at the Society for Consumer Psychology Summer Conference (competitive paper), August, San Francisco, California.

- Xu, Alison Jing and A.V. Muthukrishnan (2007), “Gifts vs. Coupons: Do Consumers Know Their True Preference?” presented at the 2007 INFORMS Marketing Science Conference, June, Singapore.
- Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2006), “The Effect of Mind-sets on Consumer Decision Strategies,” presented at the Association for Consumer Research Conference (competitive paper), September, Orlando, Florida.
- Xu, Jing, Robert S. Wyer and Rami Zwick (2005), “Will You Buy What You Prefer?: The Effect of Preference Judgment on Choice,” presented at the Society for Judgment and Decision Making Conference (Poster Session), November, Toronto, Canada.

#### **INVITED TALKS**

- UIUC Psychology Department Brownbag, April 2009.
- HKUST Marketing Department Seminar, December 2008.
- UIUC Marketing Department Seminar, September 2008.

#### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- Instructor, Consumer Behavior (undergraduate), UIUC, Spring 2009.
- Guest Lecturer on Research Method, Pricing, and Culture, for the course Marketing Principles (undergraduate; collaborating with Akshay R. Rao), HKUST, Spring 2008.
- Guest Lecturer on Current Perspectives on Behavioral Decision Making Research, for the course Judgment and Behavioral Decision Making (undergraduate; collaborating with A.V. Muthukrishnan), HKUST, Fall 2007.

## **TEACHING INTERESTS**

Consumer Behavior, Consumer Psychology, Judgment and Decision Making, Advertising, Persuasion, Negotiation, Introductory Marketing Courses

## **SERVICE TO PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION**

- Ad hoc Reviewer: *Journal of Consumer Psychology*
- Reviewer: Association for Consumer Research Conference, 2007, 2009
- Reviewer: Society for Consumer Psychology Conference, 2008

## **OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- Teaching Assistant for Executive MBA Program, Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, China. 2003-2004

## **MEMBERSHIP**

- Association for Consumer Research
- Society for Consumer Psychology
- Society for Psychological Science

## **SELECTED GRADUATE COURSEWORK**

### **Marketing Seminars**

Consumer Information Processing I	Robert S. Wyer Jr.
Consumer Information Processing II	Robert S. Wyer Jr.
Judgment and Decision Making	A.V. Muthukrishnan
Consumer Behavior	Jaideep Sengupta
Feeling and Thinking: Implications for Consumer Behavior	Norbert Schwarz
Cultural Psychology: Implications for Consumer Behavior	Daphna Oyserman
Consumer Decision Processes	Anirban Mukhopadhyay
Quantitative Modeling	Ying Zhao & Inseong Song

## Methods

Experimental Design and Analysis for Behavioral Research	Michel Pham
Statistical Method for Business and Economics I	Lancelot James
Behavioral Game Theory	Amnon Rapoport
Multivariate Data Analysis	Xuhu Wan

## REFERENCES

### **Robert S. Wyer, Jr.**

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Chair Professor of Marketing  
College of Business  
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### **A.V. Muthukrishnan**

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### **Norbert Schwarz**

Charles Horton Cooley Collegiate  
Professor of Psychology  
Professor of Marketing  
Research Professor,  
Institute for Social Research  
Research Professor,  
Program in Survey Methodology  
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### **Tiffany Barnett White**

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### **Sharon Shavitt**

Walter H. Stellner Professor of  
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## APPENDIX: ABSTRACTS FOR SELECTED RESEARCH PAPERS

Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2007), “The Effect of Mind-sets on Consumer Decision Strategies,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34 (Dec.), 556-566.

When consumers consider their preference for one of a set of products without having decided whether or not they want to buy something, they develop a “which-to-buy” mind-set that increases their likelihood of making a purchase both in the situation at hand and in subsequent unrelated situations. The effect of this mind-set is evident regardless of the commonality of the alternatives’ features and regardless of whether or not the purchase decision is revocable. The mind-set that is induced by stating preferences in one situation influences the thoughts that people generate in response to other unrelated situations they encounter subsequently and consequently affects their actual purchase behavior in these situations.

Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (2008) “The Comparative Mind-set: From Animal Comparisons to Increased Purchase Intentions,” *Psychological Science*, Vol, 19 (Sept.),859-864.

Stimulating people to state a preference for one of two commercial products can increase their willingness to purchase not only one of these products, but also other products in a totally unrelated domain. However, willingness to make a purchase in a given domain (e.g., computers) can also be increased by asking individuals (a) to indicate which of two stimuli in a different domain (e.g., vacation packages) they dislike more, (b) to compare the relative attractiveness of wild animals, (c) to compare the animals with respect to physical attributes, and (d) to estimate how similar one object is to another. Moreover, the effects generalize to decisions about dating partners, as well as consumer products. In short, making any type of comparative judgment appears likely to give rise to a comparative-judgment mind-set and, therefore, to influence decisions in subsequent situations.

Muthukrishnan, A.V., Luc Wathieu and Alison Jing Xu (forthcoming), “Ambiguity Aversion and the Power of Established Brand,” *Management Science*.

We propose that *ambiguity aversion*, as introduced in the literature on decision making under uncertainty, drives a preference for established brands in multi-attribute choice tasks among branded alternatives. Established brands are those for which quality beliefs are held with greater confidence, although their

specific attributes might be worse than those of competing, less established brand. In five experiments, we examine the role of ambiguity aversion in the preference for dominated, established brands. We first show that there is a correlation between ambiguity aversion (revealed through choices among monetary lotteries) and the preference for established brands. We then show that the preference for established brands is enhanced when ambiguity aversion is made more salient in unrelated preceding lottery choices. Thus, ambiguity aversion carries over across choices. In addition, established brand preference and ambiguity aversion are both enhanced when people anticipate evaluation by others in preceding lottery choices. Finally, ambiguous information about brand attributes may increase the preference for established brands.

Xu, Alison Jing and Robert S. Wyer (forthcoming), “The Impact of Puffery in Advertisements: The Role of Media Context, Communication Norms, and Consumer Knowledge,” *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Ads often contain puffery—product descriptions that purport to be important but actually provide little if any meaningful information. Consumers’ reactions to these descriptions can depend on whether they perceive themselves to be more or less knowledgeable about the product than others whom the ad is specifically intended to influence. When an ad appears in a professional magazine that is read primarily by experts in the product domain, puffery generally increases the ad’s effectiveness. This is also true when the ad appears in a popular magazine but readers perceive themselves to know less about the product than consumers at large. If readers believe they know as much or more than general consumers, however, adding puffery to the ad *decreases* the ad’s effectiveness. In addition, the media context in which an ad is encountered has a direct effect on judgments by consumers who perceive themselves to have little knowledge about the type of product being advertised.

Xu, Alison Jing, Rami Zwick and Norbert Schwarz “Washing Away Your (Good or Bad) Luck: Superstition, Embodiment, and Gambling Behavior,” Revising for resubmission to *Psychological Science*.

Observations of superstitious behavior suggest that gamblers and athletes change their physical appearance after a streak of bad luck, but avoid doing so after a streak of good luck. We test the metaphorical link between changes in physical status and changes in luck in a real gambling situation, using hand washing as a manipulation of physical status. Participants who encountered a winning streak bet less in a

subsequent round after having than after not having washed their hands. Conversely, participants who encountered a losing streak bet more in a subsequent round after having than after not having washed their hands.

Wyer, Robert S., Alison Jing Xu and Hao Shen “Deliberative and Automatic Effects of Past Behavior on Future Goal-Directed Activity,” in preparation.

Performing a cognitive or motor behavior in one situation can influence the likelihood of performing a conceptually similar behavior in a second, often unrelated situation. A theoretical description of deliberative and automatic goal-directed processing is used as a framework for conceptualizing these effects at several stages of information processing, including the attention to information, comprehension, evaluation, response generation, and decision making. The influence of motivation on behavior is distinguished from the impact of procedural knowledge that is activated and applied as a consequence of this motivation.