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Impacts of Efforts and Outcomes on Self-gifting Behavior
in Goal-achievement Contexts

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Abstract

This study developed a self-gifting intention model which describes that consumer intention to purchase self-gift in an achievement context is influenced by four factors, i.e., the amount of effort, happiness of success/sadness of failure, the necessary of recovery, and reward/therapeutic mood. The results of the structural equation modeling showed that, first, individuals purchase self-gifts in recovery for personal efforts in case of success, whereas they do not in case of failure. Second, the necessary of recovery is reduced by happiness of success, whereas it is reinforced by sadness of failure. Third, the amount of effort positively affects happiness of success as well as sadness of failure. Fourth, happiness of success/sadness of failure positively affects reward/therapeutic moods, which in turn positively affects self-gifting intention.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the self-gift market. Self-gift is defined as “personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context bound” (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b, p. 328). Unlike ordinary personal consumption, self-gifts have special meanings for individuals who want to make personal purchases something remarkable for oneself (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b). Appealing to these consumers, many companies have incorporated this concept into their advertisements and encouraged self-gift consumption.

While many scholars have investigated interpersonal gift-giving behavior, relatively few researchers have focused on intrapersonal gift-giving behavior, namely self-gifting. As a pioneer in self-gift research, Mick and his colleagues conducted research on determinants of self-gift behavior. The first determinant is prior effort. Based on qualitative research, Mick and DeMoss (1990a, b) claimed that personal effort was related to self-gift behavior. When individuals make more efforts, they expect higher returns and, thus, are more likely to give a gift to themselves as a return.

The second determinant is achievement outcome (success or failure). Faure and Mick (1993) and Mick and Faure (1998) claimed that positive outcome cause reward self-gift giving, whereas negative outcome cause therapeutic self-gift giving. Referring the attribution theory, they found that if persons have made efforts, they perceive deservingness to purchase self-gift irrespective of the outcome.

The third determinant is mood. Faure and Mick (1993) and Mick and Faure (1998) identified not only cognitive route via deservingness, but also affective route via various kinds of emotions related to success or failure. Luomala and Laaksone (1997) also focused on this aspect. They provided a conceptual model in which individuals tend to experience positive mood following success and keep positive mood by reward self-gifts, while individuals are likely to experience negative mood following failure and repair negative mood by therapeutic self-gifts.

However, these studies have problems and there is still room for further research. First, previous studies have introduced the concept of effort as a key determinant based on the notion that self-gift consumers exchange effort and self-gift with themselves. However, it may not be true. Rather, consumers may exchange effort for the outcomes: They may purchase self-gift if and only if prior effort has not been balanced by the outcomes.

Second, previous studies have introduced the concept of success and failure as another key determinant. However, they have modeled both outcomes in the same ways: Both success and failure cause high levels of self-gift deservingness and emotions. As they discussed, reward and

therapeutic self-gift behavior may have different specific mechanisms.

Third and finally, although previous studies have introduced affective route or moods for self-gift giving in their self-gifting intention models, they have not been successful in statistical test. Further research is needed for empirical validation of this aspect.

Thus, this study aims to develop and test a comprehensive self-gifting intention model which includes the following notions: (1) exchange between effort and the outcomes plus self-gifts, (2) different mechanisms for outcomes (success or failure), and (3) the impacts of positive/negative moods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impacts of the Amount of Efforts

Both interpersonal-gift giving and self-gift giving have been characterized as an exchange. While gift-giving behavior is related to *interpersonal* exchange (Belk, 1979), self-gifting behavior is related to *intrapersonal* exchange (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Olshavsky and Lee, 1993).

The concept of exchange is closely related to deservingness. Individuals feel that they deserve an outcome if there is consistency or balance between action and outcome (Feather, 1992). Employing this notion, Faure and Mick (1993) has introduced the concept of self-gift deservingness, which refers to the extent to which individuals' effort deserves self-gifts. When the level of effort is

high, individuals feel that they deserve self-gifts. In other words, individuals who made a lot of efforts deserve success ('fair' outcome) and self-gifts for success situations. In contrast, individuals who invested tons of efforts do not deserve failure ('unfair' outcome) but deserve self-gifts as a compensation for failure.

Thus, the concept of self-gift deservingness is similar to fairness for intrapersonal relation between effort and self-gift (cf., Adams, 1963, 1965). Individuals who made a lot of efforts deserve to give gifts to themselves for seeking fair relation between action and outcome. The amount of effort is a key factor to the self-gift deservingness (Feather, 1992; Faure and Mick, 1993). This means that the amount of efforts could be one of the antecedents of self-gift behavior. Although self-gifting intention could be affected by the amount of personal efforts, previous research has not modeled the effect of the amount of efforts on self-gifting intention.

Achievement Outcome and Attribution

Faure and Mick (1993) contended that causal attributions have effects on the self-gifting intention in achievement situations, quoting attribution theory developed by Weiner (1986). Originally, Weiner (1986) proposed three major causal attributions for outcomes in achievement contexts: locus of causality, controllability, and stability. Employing this notion, Faure and Mick (1993) noted that locus of causality and controllability have influenced self-gift behavior.

When individuals attribute his/her success to internal and controllable cause such as strong

effort, they feel positive emotion such as pride. On the other hand, when they attribute his/her failure to internal and controllable cause such as weak effort, individuals feel negative emotion such as guilt (Mick and Faure, 1998). In sum, attribution to internal and controllable causes in successful/failed contexts generates positive/negative emotion, which, in turn, leads to self-gifting (Faure and Mick, 1993; Mick and Faure, 1998). Positive or negative outcome could result in reward or therapeutic self-gift giving, respectively (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Mick and Faure, 1998).

However, no empirical research has focused on reward and therapy as antecedents of self-gift intention and examined the differences between reward and therapeutic self-gifts influences on the self-gifting intention.

Motivations and Moods

Self-gift researchers have revealed the motivations for self-gift. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) claimed that consumers' motivations for self-gifts are created under these circumstances such as rewards for accomplishments, therapeutics for disappointments, and celebrations for holidays.

Luomala and Laaksonen (1997) contended that mood is one of the most important antecedent of self-gift behavior. According to the research, individuals tend to experience positive mood after an achievement and keep positive mood by reward, while individuals tend to experience negative mood after a failure and make negative mood repaired by therapy. Besides mood, Shapiro (1993) claimed that self-gift behavior has a compulsive aspect, while Mick and DeMoss (1990b) defined

self-gifts as special indulgences that tend to be premeditated.

However, previous research failed to explain that individuals purchase self-gifts impulsively in positive mood or negative mood.

HYPOTHESES

According to the equity theory, individuals are likely to expect outputs for their inputs (Adams, 1963, 1965). They may feel fair when the level of inputs is equivalent to the level of outputs. In the context of self-gifting behavior, individuals give gifts to themselves in accordance with their expended efforts. When individuals made efforts and perceived the necessity of recovery, they feel that they deserve to purchase self-gifts in compensation for their efforts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Feather, 1992). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Amount of efforts has a positive effect on the necessity of recovery.

H2: The necessity of recovery has a positive effect on self-gifting intention.

Following a positive/negative outcome, individuals feel positive/negative emotion. These emotions have inverse effects on the perceived necessity of recovery. By feeling happiness toward a positive outcome, individuals perceive success as a benefit in compensation for their expended efforts (Adams, 1963, 1965). Therefore, the perceived necessity of recovery is attenuated by happiness of success. In contrast, by feeling sadness toward a negative outcome, individuals

perceive failure as a loss of investment of their efforts. Hence, the perceived necessity of recovery is enhanced by sadness of failure. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a: Happiness of success has a negative effect on the necessity of recovery.

H3b: Sadness of failure has a positive effect on the necessity of recovery.

The amount of efforts positively affects the extent of emotions aroused by the outcomes. In case of success, individuals who made a lot of efforts are likely to feel greater happiness towards the positive outcome more than those who did not try hard, even though they have ended up with the same outcome (Weiner, 1986). Likewise, in case of failure, individuals who made a lot of efforts tend to feel deeper sadness toward the negative outcome compared to individuals who did not try hard. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: Amount of efforts has a positive effect on happiness of success.

H4b: Amount of efforts has a positive effect on sadness of failure.

Not only “reward” for success and “therapy” for failure, but also positive and negative “mood” could be direct motivations of self-gifting behavior (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Luomala and Laaksonen, 1997). On one hand, positive mood aroused by success results in reward self-gifting behavior in order to maintain the feeling of happiness. On the other hand, negative mood aroused by failure triggers therapeutic self-gifting behaviors in order to repair the feeling of sadness (Luomala and Laaksonen, 1997). Therefore, happiness and sadness have positive effects on self-gifting intention through positive and negative moods, respectively. Thus, the following hypotheses are

proposed:

H5a: Happiness of success has a positive effect on positive mood.

H5b: Sadness of failure has a positive effect on negative mood.

H6a: Positive mood has a positive effect on self-gifting intention.

H6b: Negative mood has a positive effect on self-gifting intention.

Hypotheses in case of success are summarized in Figure 1a, whereas those in case of failure are summarized in Figure 1b.

Figure 1a. Self-Gifting Intention Model in Case of Success

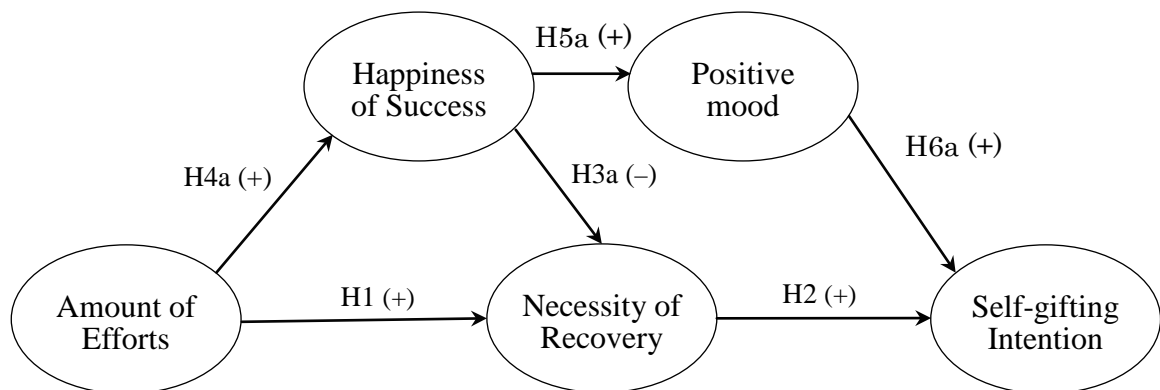
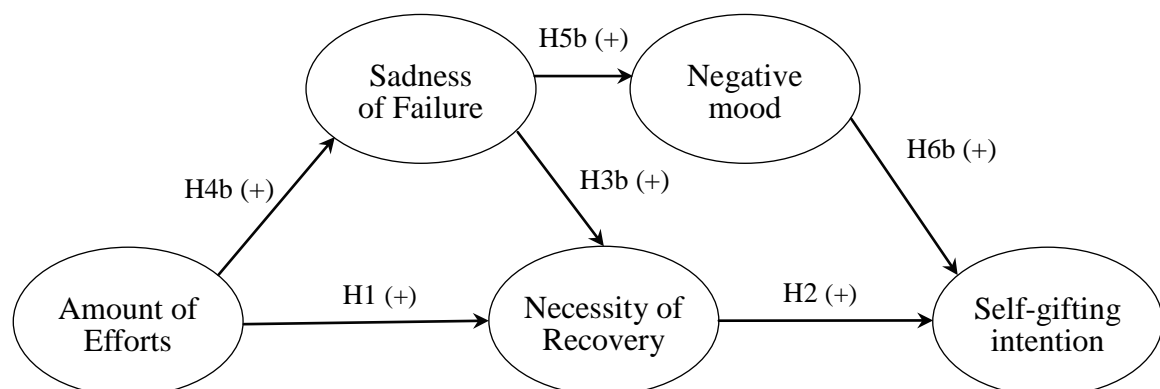


Figure 1b. Self-Gifting Intention Model in Case of Failure



METHODS

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. For the structural equation modeling, we employed multiple scales from the previous research. The items used to measure “amount of efforts” were developed based on Reilly (1982), “happiness of success” were developed based on Mehrabian, Albert, and Russel (1974), “sadness of failure” were developed based on Nyer (1997), and “self-gifting intension” were developed based on Dodds, Monroe, and Dhruv (1991). The items for the other constructs were developed because there were no relevant literatures. All items were measured on 7-point Likert’s scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

The Cronbach’s alphas were above 0.80, suggesting good reliability. Scale composite reliability (SCR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were above 0.52. These indices suggest good reliability and validity, respectively. All items were randomly divided into two groups and converted into mean for each group as manifest variables of the structural models (Bagozzi and Todd, 1994).

Respondents in this study were 380 undergraduate students in a university. The use of student sampling was justified based on previous study that reports many students readily related to the term “self-gifts” (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a). Subjects were asked to recall their own experiences about entrance exams into universities. 355 subjects (93%) were deemed usable after list-wise

deletion. 184 subjects (52%) were in the case of positive outcome (success), and 171 subjects (48%) were in the case of negative outcome (failure). With the data set, the structural equation modeling was estimated based on the maximum likelihood criterion in CALIS procedure of SAS for Windows, Ver. 9.2.

RESULTS

Case of Success

The results in case of success are summarized in Table 1a. The chi-squared value for the proposed model was 64.56 and the $\chi^2 / \text{d.f.}$ was 2.22, which was within the recommended range (not higher than 3.00) (Bollen, 1989). The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the GFI adjusted by the degree of freedom (AGFI) were 0.94 and 0.88, respectively. The AGFI was lower than the recommended level (not lower than 0.90) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), but these were probably due to the large model and the relatively small sample size. In this case, a useful index is the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), a parsimony measure that accounts for potential artificial inflation due to the estimation of many parameters. The RMSEA was 0.08, which was in the range of the recommended level of 0.08 (Steiger, 1980), indicating a close fit of the proposed model.

Table 1a. Estimation Results in Case of Success

H1: Amount of Efforts =(+)=> Necessity of Recovery	0.794	(t = 5.62) ^{***}
H2: Necessity of Recovery =(+)=> Self-gifting intention	0.268	(t = 4.35) ^{***}
H3a: Happiness of Success =(-)=> Necessity of Recovery	-0.298	(t = -2.99) ^{***}
H4a: Amount of Efforts =(+)=> Happiness of Success	0.554	(t = 6.28) ^{***}
H5a: Happiness of Success =(+)=> Positive Mood	0.647	(t = 8.83) ^{***}
H6a: Positive Mood =(+)=> Self-gifting intention	0.640	(t = 9.73) ^{***}

Notes: *** is significant at 1% level. $\chi^2_{(29)} = 64.56$, GFI = 0.94, AGFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.08, NFI = 0.95 AIC = 6.56, SBC = -86.36.

As shown in the table, all parameter estimates of structural equations had adequate signs and were significant in 1% level. Thus, all hypotheses are supported.

The amount of efforts has a significant positive effect on the necessity of recovery ($\gamma_{11} = .794$, $t = 5.62$, $p < .01$), which, in turn, has a significant positive effect on self-gifting intention ($\beta_{41} = .268$, $t = 4.35$, $p < .01$). These results support H1 and H2, which means that self-gifting intention will be higher if individuals recognize that they need large necessity of recovery.

Happiness of success has a significant negative effect on the necessity of recovery ($\beta_{12} = -.298$, $t = -2.99$, $p < .01$). This result supports H3a, which means the necessity of recovery will be lower if individuals regard the positive outcome as benefit or reward.

The amount of efforts has a significant positive effect on happiness of success ($\gamma_{21} = .554$, $t = 6.28$, $p < .01$). This result supports H4a, which means that happiness of success will be higher if individuals recognize that they have made large amount of efforts.

Finally, happiness of success has significant positive effects on positive mood ($\beta_{32} = .647$, $t = 8.83$, $p < .01$), which, in turn, has a significant positive effect on self-gifting intention ($\beta_{43} = .640$,

t = 9.73, p <.01). These results support H5a and H6a, which means that self-gifting intention will be greater if positive mood enhanced by the happiness of success is much greater.

Case of Failure

The results in case of failure are summarized in Table 1b. The chi-squared value for the proposed model was 66.73 and the χ^2 / d.f. is 2.30, which was within the recommended range. The GFI and AGFI were 0.93 and 0.87, respectively. The RMSEA was 0.09. The results indicated a close fit of the data to the proposed model.

Table 1b. Estimation Results in Case of Failure

H1: Amount of Efforts =(+)=> Necessity of Recovery	0.442	(t = 3.76) ^{***}
H2: Necessity of Recovery =(+)=> Self-gifting intention	0.074	(t = 0.93) ^{n.s.}
H3b: Sadness of Failure =(+)=> Necessity of Recovery	0.320	(t = 6.76) ^{***}
H4b: Amount of Efforts =(+)=> Sadness of Failure	0.364	(t = 4.16) ^{***}
H5b: Sadness of failure =(+)=> Negative Mood	0.571	(t = 7.01) ^{***}
H6b: Negative Mood =(+)=> Self-gifting intention	0.421	(t = 4.98) ^{***}

Notes: ^{***} is significant at 1% level. $\chi^2_{(29)} = 66.73$, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.87, RMSEA = 0.09, NFI = 0.95 AIC = 8.74, SBC = -82.03.

As shown in the Table, all parameter estimates of structural equations had adequate signs and were significant in 1% level except the path from the necessity of recovery to self-gifting intention. Thus, all hypotheses are supported except H2.

The amount of efforts has significant positive effects on the necessity of recovery ($\gamma_{11} = .442$, t = 3.76, p <.01), but the necessity of recovery has no significant effects on the self-gifting intention

($\beta_{41} = .074$, $t = 0.93$, $p >.05$). These results support H1, but do not support H2. This means that self-gifting intention will not be higher even if individuals recognize that they need the large necessity of recovery for higher amount of efforts.

Sadness of failure has a significant positive effect on the necessity of recovery ($\beta_{21} = .320$, $t = 6.76$, $p <.01$). This result supports H3b, which means that the necessity of recovery will increase if individuals perceive a loss of their behavioral costs following failure and need recovery.

The amount of efforts has a significant positive effect on sadness of failure ($\gamma_{21} = .364$, $t = 4.16$, $p <.01$). This result supports H4b, which means that sadness of failure will increase if individuals recognize that they have made large amount of efforts.

Finally, sadness of failure has a significant positive effect on negative mood ($\beta_{32} = .571$, $t = 7.01$, $p <.01$), which, in turn, has a significant positive effect on self-gifting intention ($\beta_{43} = .421$, $t = 4.98$, $p <.01$). These results support H5b and H6b, which means that self-gifting intention will be greater if negative mood strengthened by the sadness of failure is more evoked.

DISCUSSION

Recently, many researchers have focused on and examined the antecedents of self-gifting behavior. However, there have been very few academic studies clarifying the psychological process of self-gifting behavior. This study developed a self-gifting intention model and revealed the causal

relationship among personal efforts, achievement outcomes, mood, and self-gifting intention.

Overall, this study showed three important facts.

First, we revealed that happiness of success and sadness of failure have moderating effects of the exchange between personal effort and self-gift intention via the necessity of recovery. From the perspective of intrapersonal exchange, self-gift intention will be relatively low in a successful context because prior effort is partially balanced by happiness of success. On the other hand, self-gift intention will be relatively high in a failed context because more self-gifts are needed to balance prior effort as well as sadness.

Second, we identified the difference between successful and failed contexts. As discussed above, happiness of success and sadness of failure have inverse effects on self-gift intention. From the perspective of exchange, individuals see success as a benefit caused by their efforts. On the other hand, they regard failure as an additional subject to recovery like prior efforts.

Third, two types of outcomes have positive effects on moods. From the perspective of emotions with particular achievement outcomes, both happiness of success and sadness of failure increase the value of self-gifting intention. Unlike the exchange between effort and the outcomes plus self-gifts, this emotional types of self-gifting explains compulsive purchasing of self-gifts.

Although previous research showed some of the antecedents which determined the self-gifting intention, no one has built the whole psychological process of self-gifting and identified causal relationship among the several antecedents of self-gifting. In this aspect, this paper is successful in

modeling various effects of the amount of efforts and outcomes on self-gifting intention simultaneously.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEACH

First, the results show that although most fit indices are within the recommended range, some are not. Also, we used a student convenient sample. Thus, we need to examine external validity of the proposed model by investigating other self-gifting experiences of various age-groups. In this study, we measured predictor and criterion variables from the same sources. To eliminate the effect of common method bias, predictor and criterion variables should be gathered from different sources.

For future research, we encourage researchers to further explore how much and what kinds of products individuals are willing to pay as self-gifts. Because self-gifts have special meanings for individuals, it would be beneficial to compare the differences between ordinary purchasing behavior and self-gifting behavior in terms of the amount of payment and purchased brands and categories.

Although there are some limitations and future prospects of this study, we believe that the self-gifting intention model we developed is very fruitful for understanding the different psychological mechanism between reward and therapeutic self-gift behavior in success or failure situations.

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