

The Effect of Multitasking Behavior on Consumer Creativity

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Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine how multitasking behavior affects consumer creativity, and to determine what type of multitasking would have more of an effect on consumer creativity.

Multitasking

The term "multitasking" is considered novel in many fields but the general idea is relatively similar to studies in cognitive psychology on dual-task performance (Pashler 1994; Logan and Gordon 2001). There are two main ways to think about multitasking as a process: sequential multitasking and concurrent multitasking. Sequential Multitasking refers to when tasks are performed sequentially including "task switching" to accomplish more than one goal at a time (Delbridge 2000). Concurrent multitasking refers to when tasks are performed simultaneously with almost no switching time between the tasks (Chinchachokchai and Duff 2013).

Creativity

Perhaps no psychological concept has proven to be as difficult to measure as creativity (Hocevar 1981). Psychologists have a wide range of differing definitions when it comes to this subject. In its earliest days, creativity was seen as a unique ability possessed by only a few. It was strongly linked to individuals of intelligence and complex mindsets. Throughout its time, creativity began to be seen not as subcomponent of intelligence, but the product of ordinary cognitive process (Ward, Smith, & Finke 1999). Most psychologists define creativity in terms of the process, the person, and the product. Creativity is found everywhere in consumer behavior. Consumer creativity can be defined as the problem solving capability possessed by the individual that may be applied toward solving consumption-related problems (Hirschman 1980).

Experiment

The experiment included three conditions:

- Single Task
- Sequential Multitasking
- Concurrent Multitasking

Condition One – Single Task

- In the single task condition, participants completed a problem solving task, which required them to generate as many ideas as possible for uses of common objects such as a paper clip and a coffee mug.

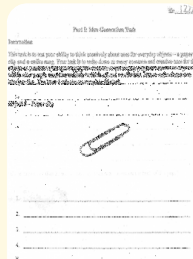
Condition Two – Sequential Multitasking

- In the sequential multitasking condition, an additional task – drawing task – was introduced and the participants performed the two tasks sequentially.

Condition Three – Concurrent Multitasking

- In the concurrent multitasking condition, the participants performed both tasks simultaneously within a limited time.

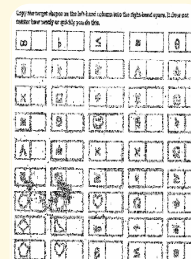
Creativity & Drawing Tasks



Creativity Task: Idea Generation
Students were asked to write down as many common and creative uses of the object as possible in the space provided.



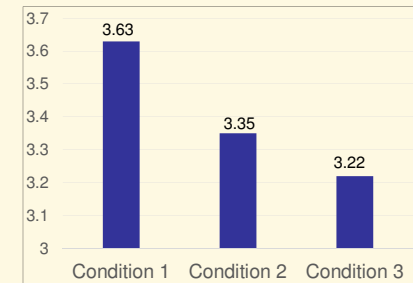
Drawing Task: Connect the Dots
Students were asked to start at the number one and connect the dots to finish the picture.



Drawing Task: Complete the Shape
Students were asked to copy the shapes on the left-hand column into the right-hand space.

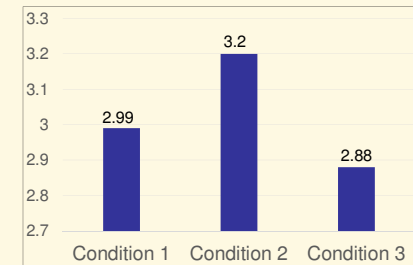
Preliminary Findings

Creativity Score: Paper Clip



$$F(2,80) = 2.63, p = .07$$

Creativity Score: Mug



$$F(2,60) = 0.696, p = n.s.$$

Future Research

This study only looked at a perceptual task (drawing) as a secondary task. The future studies will explore other types of tasks that are more similar to what consumers do in daily lives such as doing homework, texting, surfing the internet, etc.

Acknowledgements

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