

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Too Intimate to Indulge: The Impact of Intimate Language in Sales Interactions on Indulgent Consumption

By



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Date : 27 May 2025 (TUE)

Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon

Venue : GH120c, PolyU

Abstract

Most consumers have been exposed to intimate language in sales interactions, but it remains unclear how such language used by salespeople affects consumer decision-making. Through nine studies, which include eight experiments and an analysis of field data from a livestream selling platform, the current research shows that consumers' preference for indulgent consumption lessens when salespeople use intimate language in their interactions. This use of intimate language causes the consumers to psychologically distance themselves from the salespeople, leading consumers to reduce indulgent consumption. The effect is attenuated when intimate language becomes an expected norm in sales communication or when salespeople have established a close relationship with the consumers. Interestingly, this effect persists in consumer-chatbot interaction. This research advances the understanding of the use of intimate language in marketing and sheds light on how intimate language affects consumer behavior.

Prof. Kuangjie Zhang is Associate Professor of Marketing and Academic Director for the MSc Marketing Science program at Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He holds a Ph.D. in Management (Marketing specialization) from INSEAD. His research interests focus on pricing and numerical cognition as well as the domain of hedonic and experiential consumption. His research has appeared in leading academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*) and managerial publications (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*). He currently serves on the editorial review board of *Journal of Consumer Research*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, and *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*. He has won both the Research Excellence Award and the Teaching Excellence Award at Nanyang Business School.

All interested are welcome.



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