

Anxiety in Gift Giving Behavior

第五期 韓 可

INTRODUCTION

Gift-giving has been studied in the field of psychology, anthropology and economics as well as consumer research. The worldwide extension of gift markets has not only encouraged various researches, but also permitted to marketers to develop and use practical tools. Belk (1976) in his study of gift selection, proposed a model of balance in gift giving based on cognitive consistency theories. He defined gift-giving as “The phenomenon of selecting an object or service “X” to present as a gift to person “Y” on occasion “Z”. Most researchers have shown an interest in motivation and situational variables in gift-giving behavior (Wolfenbarger, 1990; Wolfenbarger, Finley and Yale, 1993; Gehrt, 2002; Belk, 1975, 1982). However, while Wooten (2000) argued that givers become anxious when they were highly motivated but doubtful about success, little study has done to explore the effect of anxiety in gift-purchasing behavior.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES

2.1 Gift giving in consumer behavior

Belk (1979) classified functions of gift giving into four categories in his study of the gift giving behavior: gift-giving as communication, gift-giving as social exchange, economic exchange, and gift-giving as socializer. The result of two indicated that gift selections depended upon the giver’s ideal self-concept, the nature of the occasion, and the giver’s relationship to the recipients.

Wolfenbarger (1990), in her study focusing on motivations and symbolism in gift giving behavior, categorized motivations for gift-giving into three types: altruism, norms, and self-interest. Another three motivations for gift-giving were suggested by Wolfenbarger and Yale in 1993: an experiential/ positive attitude towards giving, an obligated attitude, and a practical attitude. The three attitudes of gift givers occur when the gift-giving is for the enjoyment of giving, for the reciprocating or social norms, and for supplying practical assistance to the receiver, respectively. Goodwin, Smith and Spiggle (1990), in their study of motivations in gift giving, developed three distinct constructs: experiential/ positive, obligated, and practical motivations. Sherry (1983) proposed a model of gift exchange process including gestation stage which consumer researchers focused on, pre-station stage which anthropologists placed an emphasis, and

reformulation stage which interested both of the researchers. He suggested the important of a wide view framework to describe the comprehension process of gift exchange. In his study, motivation which was in the gestation stage might be categorized into altruistic and agonistic.

2.2 Anxiety in gift giving

Vreeland (1998) pointed out that gift giving become such a tortured moment because people packed a lot of psychological intention (love, statues, respect, etc.) into gifts. Gift is not just a gift but a fundamental form of human communication. Sherry, et al, (1993) holded the same manner in that the gift threatened social ties therefore it proved people stress as a result.

Otnes, et al. (1992), in their study of Christmas shopping, examined about gift selection strategies used by givers for “difficult” people. The study focused on the reason of them being categorized as difficult recipients and the strategy givers use when shopping for difficult people. A year later, they made it clear how gift selection was done for difficult recipients and easy recipients respectively after classifying giver into six social roles: the pleaser, the provider, the compensator, the socializer, the acknowledger, and the avoider (Otnes, et al., 1993). McGrath, et al. (1993) also focused on the behavior of gift giver by adopting projective techniques.

Most studies mentioned above adopt ethnographic investigation to investigate giver’s emotion in gift giving. However, no research has taken the approach of quantitative analysis. This study is of value to the field of gift giving anxiety in that demonstrating the empirical validity by quantitative data analysis.

SOCIAL ANXIETY AND WOOTEN’S GIFTING ANXIETY MODEL

3.1 Social anxiety and self-presentation

As social objects, people tend to be anxious when they are looked at by others. Buss (1980) defined social anxiety, which was comprised of embarrassment, shame, shyness, and audience anxiety, as discomfort in the presence of others.

Several studies have proved that social anxiety has related to the nature of self-presentation. According to Schlenker (1980), self-presentation is the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images of self before real or imagined audiences. That is people are motivated to make a good impression on others innately. However, when people want to make some desired impressions to others, they often face various problems. For example, they do not know how to go about it; they feel insecure to produce preferred reactions from others, and so on. At times like this, the actor tends to be anxious. As Schlenker and Leary (1982) pointed out, social anxiety generates when people are motivated to make a particular impression on others but doubt that they will do so.

Leary & Schlenker (1981) also mentioned about shyness which was proposed to be a state of social anxiety arising in contingent interactions. They suggested that shyness arose when people were motivated to make a favorable impression on others but doubted their ability to project images of themselves that will produce satisfactory reactions from the others.

According to Leary and Kowalski (1995), social anxiety (SA) is composed of impression motivation (M) and impression efficacy (ρ). They defined the model of social anxiety as: $SA = M(1 - \rho)$. Social anxiety increases when the actor's level of motivation to make a desired impression (M) become high, and conversely. On the other hand, his or her perceived probability of success (ρ) decreases the social anxiety.

3.2 Wooten's gifting anxiety model

Social anxiety model (SA model) insists that people become anxious when they are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success. Although there has been a great discussion about SA model in the field of psychology, researchers has paid little attention to explore the impact of anxious emotion on consumer behaviors.

Wooten (2000) has adopted SA model to explore gift giver's anxiety. According to Wooten, there are five major factors that elicit two variables (M and ρ) of SA model (p.85). The two components of impression motivation (M) are evaluative salience and interpersonal stakes. Evaluative salience indicates the perceived importance of other's evaluation, and interpersonal stakes means the perceived importance of persona relationship. Meanwhile, degree of uncertainty, perceived self-presentational demand, and perceived self-presentational resource are three factors that underlie the effects of variables that influence impression efficacy (ρ).

Based on surveys on 115 undergraduate students and 20 adults, Wooten established a new model of gift giver's anxiety. He suggests that givers become anxious when they are pessimistic about forthcoming reactions to their gifts (p.93). That is, giver's anxiety arises when they are motivated to elicit desired responses from recipients but doubt of success (p. 93). This result also supports what SA model argues.

According to Wooten's survey, there are thirteen antecedents that influence the five factors mentioned above (p.87). They are influence, collectivity, selectivity, perfectionism, importance, formality, affluence, mutuality, novelty, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, gifting capacity, and confidence. The interconnection between those antecedents and factors are summarized in figure 1.

Figure 1
Wooten's model of anxiety in gift-giving (p.88)



NOTE: All effects are positive unless otherwise noted. The letters *G*, *R*, and *S* denote characteristics of givers, recipients and situations, respectively.

Antecedents

Influence: a quality of recipients to be able and willing to bestow valued rewards upon givers.

Collectivity: the extent to which multiple participants/ audience size

Selectivity: having limited wants and unappreciative, with careful inspection.

Perfectionism: propensity of givers to set extremely high standards themselves and be displeased with

anything less.

Importance: special occasion that it is perceived as being important to the recipients.

Formality: degree to which events are rigidly ceremonious.

Affluence : recipients' material prosperity.

Mutuality: the expectation that a gifting situation will involve simultaneous reciprocity.

Novelty: situations that a new to givers or rarely encountered by them.

Unfamiliarity : a lack of knowledge about recipients' tastes, wants, or needs.

Dissimilarity: major difference between giver and recipients on salient dimensions.

Gifting capacity : quality of possessing the necessary means to succeed as givers.

Confidence : self-assurance

Wooten's study of anxiety in gift giving makes several contributions to gift giving literature (p.93). Firstly, his new model furthers the study of anxiety in gift giving by introducing a well-established model that based on the self-presentational basis of social anxiety. Secondly, he classifies his findings into characteristics of recipients, situations, and givers. He also contributes to impression management literature in discovering of new antecedents: formality and perfectionism. In addition, the study makes it clear that gifting anxiety is social in nature.

However, some limitations appear in Wooten's research (p.94). What seems to be lacking in Wooten's study is research data to support the empirical adequacy of his hypotheses. He ended the study by establishing hypotheses instead of verifying them. Further examine supported by quantitative study is needed to reinforce the theory. Another concern of the study can be said to be the interrelationships among constructs of the model. The relationship may be more complicated but not a simple liner one as Wooten mentioned. Additionally, one's beliefs about scope of impression management are thought to affect his/her interpretation of gifting anxiety. It also can be said that one's impression management will change according to different behaviors, types of people and conditions.

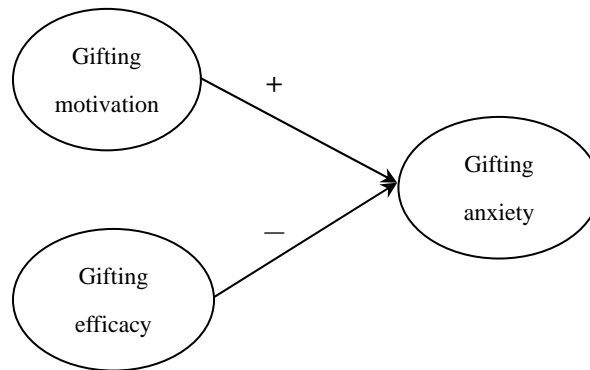
NEW MODEL

4.1 Social anxiety model

Wooten (2000) constructed a new model of giver's anxiety in gift giving by using social anxiety model suggested by Leary and Schlenker (1981). The present study also put its focus on social anxiety model to expand and deepen the discussion of giver's anxiety in gift giving. As mentioned in chapter 3, social anxiety arises when people are motivated to make a preferred impression on real or imagined audiences but doubt they will do so (Schlenker and Leary, 1982). The model is proved to be applicable to the field of gift giving behavior by Wooten (2000). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Gifting motivation has positive effects on gifting anxiety.

Hypothesis 2: Gifting efficacy has positive effects on gifting anxiety.



4.2 Interrelationship among constructs

The model of Wooten (2000) leaves room for improvement in interrelationships among constructs of reaction motivation and gifting efficacy. He indicated that “some givers may be motivated by high gifting demands while others may be discouraged.” It is easy to assume that giver with different value of impression management will act differently even if they were facing the same situation. Therefore, reexamine the relationship among constructs of M and ρ is imperative in this study.

4.2.1 Difficult recipients and difficult situations

The present study will classify stimulus into difficult recipients and difficult situations to examine how givers reaction when encountering each situation. The level of giver being motivated to make a preferred impression may rise as perceived recipients or perceived situations becoming “difficult”. Simultaneously, the level of giver’s doubt about their ability to achieve the goal may also increase in such situation.

Thirteen antecedents shaping perceptions of five variables that affect motivation and efficacy were clarified in Wooten’s research. Those antecedents were classified into three groups (givers, recipients and situations) according to their characteristics that coincide with them. According to Wooten, five antecedents (influence, selectivity, affluence, unfamiliarity, and dissimilarity) are identified as characteristics of recipients and five antecedents (collectivity, importance, formality, mutuality, and novelty) are identified as characteristics situations. Those antecedents could be components of external stimulus that makes giver anxiety. Additionally, perceived recipients limitations and perceived imbalance were pointed out by Otnes, et al. (1992) as characteristics of difficult recipients. For example, presents for people lack of hobbies or

elder people are relatively limited because of personal or physical reasons. On the other hand, some givers may feel gift giving difficult when they perceive the gift exchange is imbalanced in monetary or other aspects.

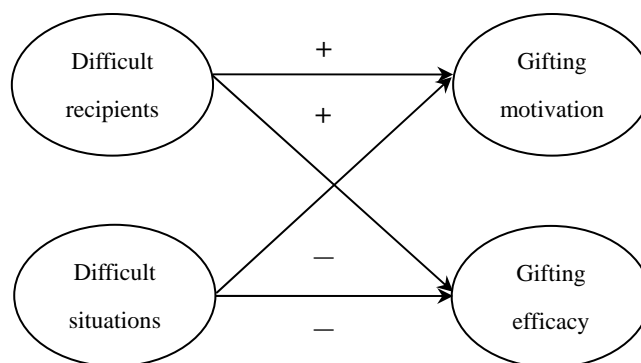
Briefly, the relationship between external stimulus (difficult recipients and difficult situations) and giver's reactions (gifting motivation and gifting efficacy) may not be a linear one but more complicated. One can say that difficult recipients and difficult situations will elicit giver's motivation and weaken perceived efficacy of their action at a time. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Difficult recipients have positive effects on gifting motivation.

Hypothesis 4: Difficult situations have negative effects on gifting motivation.

Hypothesis 5: Difficult recipients have positive effects on gifting efficacy.

Hypothesis 6: Difficult situations have negative effects on gifting efficacy.



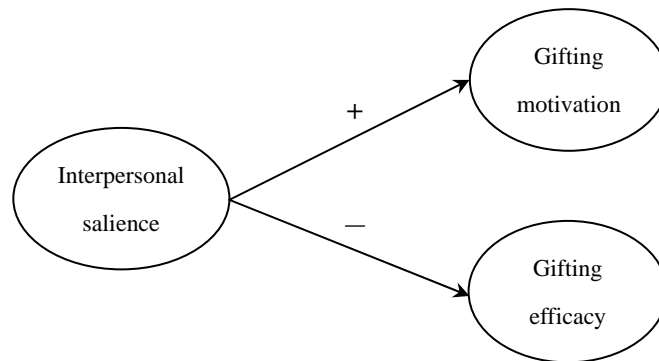
4.2.2 Giver's interpersonal salience

Interpersonal salience refers to giver's personality from an interpersonal view. Giver's interpersonal salience also could be a factor that influence giver's mind in gift choosing process. According to Schlenker and Leary (1982), self-attention may increase people's focus on meeting "the standards for their performance reflect their effectiveness in procuring satisfactory impression-relevant reactions from others," and this "could further heighten the experience of social anxiety." In addition, "other-directed" and "want to gain approval/ avoid disapproval" are listed as personalities of people who should be highly motivated to give good impressions to others. Fear of negative evaluation also found to increase social anxiety according to Leary (1980). Wooten (2000), in his study of gifting anxiety, argued that the perfectionists are likely to be anxious about attaining high demands imposed themselves. Those factors can be used to measure the degree of the giver's interpersonal salience. The giver who is more likely to be self-attention, other-directed, want to gain approval/ avoid disapproval, fear of negative and perfectionism may be highly motivated to make a preferred impression in gift giving and doubts they will do so. Therefore, the following hypotheses

are proposed:

Hypothesis 7: Giver's interpersonal salience has positive effects on gifting motivation.

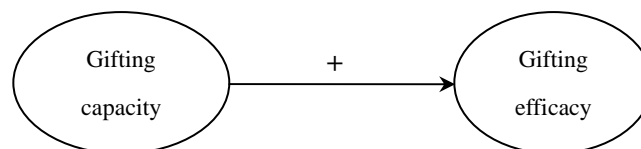
Hypothesis 8: Giver's interpersonal salience has negative effects on gifting efficacy.



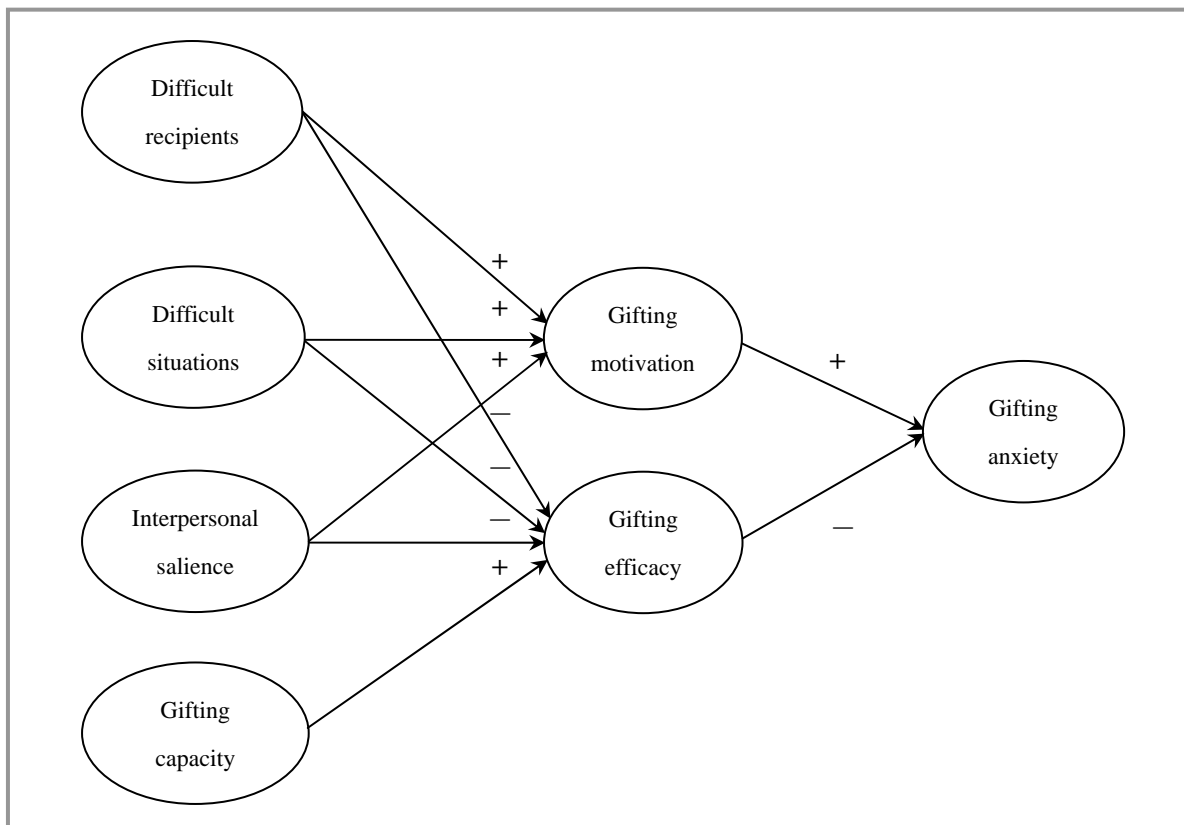
4.2.3 Gifting resources

Giver with perceived limited capacity for meeting gifting demands would become anxious. Wooten (2000) argued that doubts about eliciting desired reactions to their gifts cause givers' anxiety. Gifting capacity consists of not only productive resources such as money, time and effort, but also cognitive resources such as creativity and knowledge. Givers express doubts about efficacy of their gifts when at least one of those resources seems to be lacking (Wooten, 2000). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 9: Gifting capacity has positive effects on gifting efficacy.



The proposed new model is shown in figure below.



METHODOLOGY

▪ Difficult recipients:

influence (受け手の評価が自分に大きな影響を与える),
selectivity (受け手が限られた嗜好、欲求しかもたない、感謝知らず),
affluence (受け手が裕福である、成功している),
unfamiliarity (受け手をよく知らない、親しくない),
dissimilarity (受け手と送り手が明らかに異なる方面がある),
limitation (嗜好に限りがある、年齢や身体による制限がある),
imbalance (送り手のギフトと以前受け手にもらったギフトの価値があまりに違いすぎる)

▪ Difficult situations:

collectivity (ほかの参加者の人数),
importance (重要な場である),
formality (正式な場である),
mutuality (ギフトの同時交換が予想される),
novelty (新しい、未知の場である)

- Giver's interpersonal salience:
self-attention (自己意識が強い) ,
other-directed (他人志向である) ,
want to gain approval/ avoid disapproval (評価されたい、非難を避けたい) ,
fear of negative (他者からの否定的評価に対して不安である) ,
perfectionism (完璧主義者である)

- Gifting capacity
Money (財力)
Time (時間)
Effort (ギフト選択の努力)
Knowledge (自分は知識があると思う)
Creativity (自分は想像力豊かだと思う)

REFERENCES

- Belk, Russell (1975), "Situational Variables and Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.2, No.2, pp.157-164.
- Belk, Russell (1976), "It's the Thought that Counts: A Signed Diagraph Analysis of Gift-Giving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.155-162.
- Belk, Russell W. (1979), "Gift-Giving Behavior," *Research in Marketing*, Vol.2, pp.95-126.
- Belk, Russell W. (1982), "Effect of Gift-Giving Involvement on Gift Selection Strategies," *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol.9, Issue.1, pp.408-412.
- Buss, Arnold H. (1980), *Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety*, San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Gehrt, Kenneth C. (2002), "Situational Influence in the International Marketplace: An Examination of Japanese Gift Giving," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol.10, No.1, pp.11-22.
- Leary, Mark R. and Narry R. Schlenker (1981), "The Social Psychology of Shyness: A Self-Presentation Model," in Tedeschi. James T. ed., *Impression Management Theory and Social Psychological Research*, New York: Academic Press, pp.335-356.
- Leary, Mark R. and Robin M. Kowalski (1995), *Social Anxiety*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- McGrath, Mary Ann and John F. Sherry, Jr. Mary and Sidney J. Levy (1993), "Giving Voice to the Gift: The Use of Projective Techniques to Recover Lost Meanings," *Journal of Consumer psychology*, Vol.2, No.2 pp.171-191.
- Otnes Cele, Tina M. Lowrey and Young Chan Kim (1992), "Ho, Ho, Woe: Christmas Shopping for

- “Difficult” People,” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 19, Issue.1, pp.482-487.
- Otnes Cele, Tina M. Lowrey and Young Chan Kim (1993), “Gift Selection for Easy and Difficult Recipients: A Social Roles Interpretation,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.20, No.2, pp.229-244.
- Schlenker, Barry R. and Mark R. Leary (1982), “Social Anxiety and Self-Presentation: A Conceptualization and Model,” *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.92, No.3, pp.641-669.
- Sherry, John F., Jr. (1983), “Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.157-168.
- Sherry, John F., Jr. Mary Ann McGrath and Sidney J. Levy (1993), “The Dark Side of the Gift,” *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.28, pp.225-244.
- Vreeland, Leslie (1998), “Tick, Tick, Tick, ...,” *Psychology Today*, December, pp.38-41.
- Wolfenbarger, M. F (1990) “Motivations and Symbolism in Gift-Giving Behavior,” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol.17, Issue.1, pp.699-706
- Wolfenbarger, Mary Finley and Laura J. Yale (1993), “Three Motivations for International Gift-Giving: Experiential, Obligated and Practical Motivations,” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol.20, Issue.1, pp.520-526.
- Wooten, David B. (2000), “Qualitative Steps toward an Expanded Model of Anxiety in Gift-Giving,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.27, No.1, pp.84-95.