

Study Protocol

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**Aim of the study protocol:** The study protocol (SP) deals with the design of the empirical survey for the bachelor's/master's thesis.

**1. Summary of the Experiment (interview, survey, study, etc.)**

- a. Location of the experiment
- b. Time span of the experiment
- c. Test subjects/study participants
- d. Recruitment of test subjects/study participants
- e. Incentive for test subjects/study participants
- f. Support (optional)
- g. Design of the experiment and number of participants (in keywords)
- h. Procedure of the experiment

**2. Theoretical Background of the Experiment**

- a. Subject of the study (aim of the experiment)
- b. Research gap to be closed by the experiment
- c. Research design

**3. Description of the Experiment**

- a. Detailed description of the experiment procedure

**4. Scales used**

- a. Explanation of the scales used for the experiment

**5. Bibliography**

## Example of an IRM Study Protocol

## 1. Summary of the Experiment

Overview	
Location of the survey	Media Markt Traunstein, the survey table is located approx. 5 meters after the entrance (see Appendix 1)
Time span of the experiment	Survey planned for 6 days during Media Markt opening hours (9:30-19:00).
Test subjects	<u>3 age groups</u> Young group: <b>aged 18 to 44</b> Middle-aged group: <b>aged 45 to 64</b> Older group: <b>aged 65 and above</b>
Recruitment of test subjects	The test subjects are approached as soon as they enter the Media Markt store and can take part in the experiment immediately. Sufficient test subjects were found for the pre-test.
Incentive for test subjects	Participation in the competition with a chance to win a Media Markt voucher; Ritter Sport mini chocolate as a consolation prize  10 Media Markt vouchers with different values (7 x 10€ and 3 x 25€)
Support	Damian Hoststettler, a bachelor student who is studying the same subject, will support me for 2-3 days. Media Markt is also trying to provide me with an intern for this period.
Design of the experiment and number of participants	2 x 3 study design = 6 groups of 50, 300 test subjects each 2 manipulated conditions (low vs. high info rate) x 3 age groups
Experiment procedure	1. Addressing a consumer 2. Briefing of the test subject 3. <b>Preliminary questionnaire</b> on involvement (situational + ongoing), duration approx. 1 min 4. <b>Test purchase</b> according to the "shopping list" with the products coffee machine and digital camera in 2 different versions (light and heavy), duration between 3 and 15 minutes (depending on the test subject) 5. <b>Questionnaire</b> on remaining model variables (see Table 2), duration approx. 4-6 minutes

**Commented [TR1]:** Is there a quota plan? There must be a sufficient

## 2. Theoretical Background of the Experiment

### Object of the study:

The object of the planned study is to investigate the influence of advanced age on consumer confusion and possible defense mechanisms (prevention + reduction of excessive demands).

### Research gap:

Previous studies on the purchasing behavior of mature consumers and consumer confusion studies have shown various deficits. To date, there has been no systematic study that provides a differentiated picture of the influence of age on individual factors in the consumer-confusion effect structure. Nor does the literature provide a detailed description of how mature consumers behave in the face of possible excessive demands and what mechanisms they develop to cope with them. The interaction between age and involvement has also never been investigated in detail.

### Research design:

The research design of this study is shown in Figure 1. The manipulation of the perceived information rate is carried out in such a way that half of the test subjects are confronted with a difficult shopping list and should therefore perceive a higher information rate. The other half of the test subjects are given an easier shopping list and therefore have to deal less with the stimuli in the store. A lower perceived information rate is manipulated here.

In addition, a division is made based on age. There is an older group (65+) and two younger reference groups: the young group (18-44) and the middle-aged group (45-64). After reviewing various articles in the JCR, JM and JMR, it is possible to compare older consumers only with a young reference group (often students), but important findings may be lost. On the advice of JBA, three groups were formed. This results in a 2 x 3 matrix.

The six groups are then examined and compared in terms of their emotions and reduction strategies, and the influence of age on involvement is also examined. The six different experimental fields are shown again in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Research design

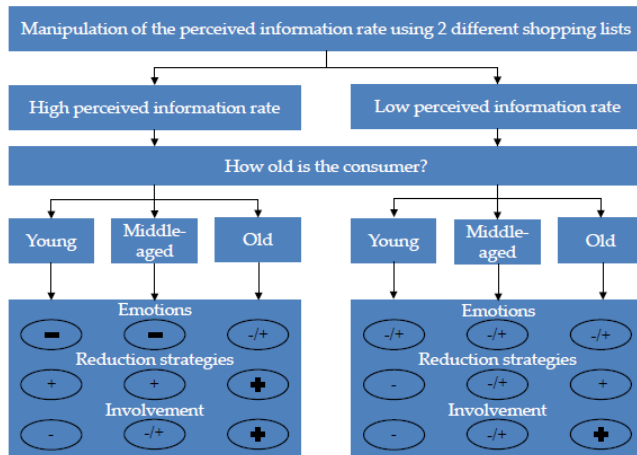


Figure 2: Experimental fields

		Age		
		young	middle-aged	old
Perceived information rate	high	(strong) negative emotions, reduction strategies <i>low involvement</i>	(strong) negative emotions, reduction strategies <i>moderate involvement</i>	few to no negative emotions, numerous reduction strategies <i>high involvement</i>
	low	few negative emotions, few reduction strategies <i>low involvement</i>	few negative emotions, few reduction strategies <i>moderate involvement</i>	few to no negative emotions, reduction strategies <i>high involvement</i>

### 3. Description of the Experiment

#### Experiment:

The experiment consists of three parts: a very short survey on involvement, the test purchase and the post-test questionnaire.

First, customers are asked whether they would like to take part in an experiment for a doctoral thesis. They are briefly informed about the test purchase and told that the experiment includes two short questionnaires. As an additional incentive, reference is made to the prize draw and the consolation prize (chocolate). In terms of content, the data collection is presented as an experiment on consumer behavior, but not as an experiment on consumer confusion. This might create negative feelings in (older) test subjects or the test subjects could try to appear particularly capable.

If the customers agree to participate, they start with the first questionnaire (**pre-test shopping questionnaire**). For this purpose, the shopping list is first shown to the test persons so that they can assess their familiarity with and experience of the products in the questionnaire. The rating scale (7-point Likert scale) is then briefly explained, using a DIN A3 scale on the table (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3: DIN A3 scale

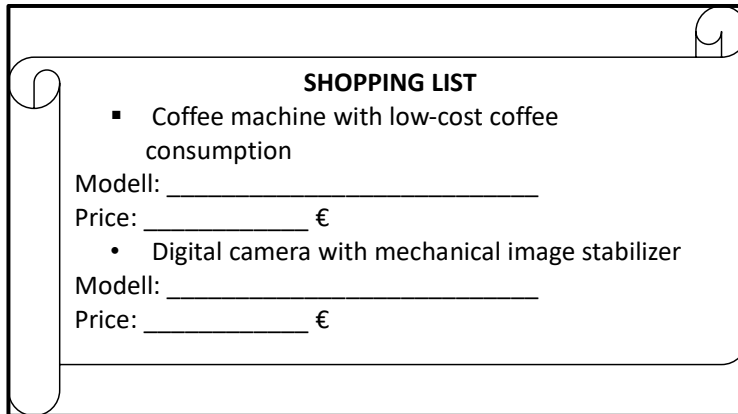
completely agree	agree	tend to agree	neutral	rather disagree	disagree	vote at all not too
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

This helps with visualization and is an advantage for test subjects with visual impairments. In most cases, the pre-test questions are read aloud so that the respondents can get started more quickly (they don't have to put their things down first, etc.).

The involvement construct is surveyed in the pre-test purchase questionnaire in order to avoid any distorting effects from the test purchase. Later, a median split can be used to create a high and low involvement group. The pre-test purchase questionnaire takes approx. 45 seconds to 1 minute.

The **test shopping** then begins: the following shopping lists are handed out in turn (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Shopping lists to manipulate the perceived information rate



**SHOPPING LIST**

- Coffee machine with low-cost coffee consumption  
Modell: \_\_\_\_\_  
Price: \_\_\_\_\_ €
- Digital camera with mechanical image stabilizer  
Modell: \_\_\_\_\_  
Price: \_\_\_\_\_ €

**Commented [TR2]:** Please specify the exact task. What are the customers told? I would like to know exactly.

The shopping list on the left manipulates a high perceived information rate and the shopping list on the right manipulates a low perceived information rate. On both shopping lists, the same products were selected on the advice of TWA, but with an easy task (right) and a hard task (left). Both products are available in large quantities (approx. 80-90 coffee machine models over 5 shelves; 69 different digital camera models + 30 other professional cameras).

The participants are asked to recreate a real purchase with typical emotions and to behave normally. The only difference to a real purchase is that the participants are only asked to note the product and the price, but not to buy it.

No maximum duration is specified for the test purchase, so the test purchase takes between 3 and 15 minutes.

Finally, the **post-test shopping questionnaire** is handed out when the test subjects have returned from their test shopping. The test subjects are asked to recall the test purchase and evaluate their impressions based on the various statements. This questionnaire takes about 4-6 minutes.

Finally, the test subjects are allowed to draw a ticket to take part in the prize draw. Either the ticket indicates that they have won a voucher, or the test subjects are comforted with the words: "Unfortunately, we have only been active in the service of science, but there is still a consolation prize". In this case, the participants can choose a Ritter Sport Mini chocolate.

The test subjects are thanked once again for their participation and are dismissed if there are no further questions.

#### 4. Scales used

Table 2 provides an overview of the scales used in the experiment.

Table 2: Overview of the scales used in the experiment

Part I:	Pre-test purchase questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1-3:</b> 3 Statements on <b>familiarity/experience with products/shop environment</b> → <i>Mishra et al. (1993), JMR; Martin/Stewart (2001); JMR</i></li> <li>• <b>Statement 4-7:</b> 4 Statements on <b>situational involvement</b> → <i>Schweizer (2005)</i> and originally <i>Mittal/Lee (1989), JEP; Laurent/Kapferer (1985), JMR</i></li> </ul>
Part II:	Test purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulation of the perceived information rate (low vs. high)</li> </ul>
Part III:	Post-test purchase questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Question 1: Perceived information rate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Statement 1-3: Stimulus diversity</li> <li>✓ Statement 4-6: Stimulus novelty</li> <li>✓ Statement 7-9: Stimulus complexity</li> <li>✓ Statement 10-11: Stimulus conflict</li> </ul>           → <i>Schweizer (2005)</i> </li> <li>• <b>Question 2: Emotions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Statement 1, 3, 7: Positive emotions</li> </ul>           → <i>Richins (1997), JCR, etc. originally Watson et al. (1988)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Statement 2, 4-6: Negative emotions</li> </ul>           → <i>Luce (1998), JCR; similar to Schweizer (2005)</i> </li> <li>• <b>Question 3: Reduction strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Statement 1-2: Habitual purchasing</li> <li>✓ Statement 3-4: Selective decision</li> <li>✓ Statement 5-6: Purchase deferral</li> <li>✓ Statement 7-8: Decision support</li> </ul>           → <i>Schweizer (2005)</i> </li> <li>• <b>Question 4:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Statement 1-3: Satisfaction with shopping experience</li> </ul>           → <i>Maxham/Nettemeyer (2003), JM</i> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Question 5: Frequency of purchases per year</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Question</li><li>➔ <i>Schweizer (2005)</i></li></ul></li><li>• <b>Question 6: Manipulation check</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Statement 1-3: Shopping costs</li><li>➔ <i>Baker et al. (2002), JM</i></li></ul></li><li>• <b>Question 7: Self-confidence</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Statement 1-3</li><li>➔ <i>Chaplin/John 2007, JCR; originally Rosenberg (1965)</i></li></ul></li><li>• <b>Questions 8-12: Personal details</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Gender</li><li>✓ Age</li><li>✓ Household size &amp; employment</li><li>✓ Educational qualification</li><li>✓ Occupation</li></ul></li></ul>
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