

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

物質傾向、人格特質、消費倫理信念與刷爆信用卡行為意圖 之關聯研究

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物質傾向、人格特質、消費倫理信念與刷爆信用卡行為意圖之關聯研究 **The Relationships between Materialism, Personality, Consumer Ethical Beliefs, and the Over-Limit Intentions**

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一、中文摘要

本研究提出一個連結人格特質（內外控與風險承擔傾向）、一般倫理判斷（包括主動非法獲利、被動獲利於其他人、主動獲利於有問題行為與獲利於無傷害行為等四構面）以及不償付信用卡費行為意圖之概念模式。為了檢驗此模式，我們以問卷蒐集國內448位信用卡持有者（年滿20歲）的資料。研究結果顯示內外控與風險承擔傾向兩特質均對一般倫理判斷的每一構面有顯著正向影響；主動非法獲利與被動獲利於其他人之倫理判斷對不償付信用卡費之行為意圖有顯著正向影響；此外，內外控亦會直接正向影響不償付信用卡費之行為意圖。基於實證研究發現，我們提供了若干管理上的意涵與建議。

關鍵詞：人格特質、內外控、風險承擔傾向、一般倫理判斷（主動非法獲利、被動獲利於其他人、主動獲利於有問題行為、獲利於無傷害行為）、不償付信用卡費之行為意圖

Abstract

A model linking personality traits (locus of control and risk-taking propensity), general ethical judgments regarding credit card use (actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting at the expense of others, actively benefiting from questionable actions, and no harm), and behavioral intention to not repay credit card expenses is proposed. To justify the model,

we used data collected from 448 credit card holders in Taiwan (at least 20 years old). The results indicated that locus of control and risk-taking propensity were both positively associated with each of the four dimensions of general ethical judgments. However, only two dimensions of ethical judgments, actively benefiting from illegal activities and passively benefiting at the expense of others, were positively related to behavioral intention to not repay credit card expenses. Furthermore, locus of control had a direct effect on behavioral intention to not repay. Some practical implications based on the empirical results were discussed.

Keywords: personality, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, general ethical judgments (actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting at the expense of others, actively benefiting from questionable actions, and no harm), behavioral intention to not repay credit card expenses

二、緣由與目的

The credit card industry has become a major financial service used by most consumers across all income classes. An example of the pervasiveness of credit card use is provided by the U.S. fast food industry. After the U.S. fast food industry began to accept credit card payment, credit sales rapidly grew to exceed cash transactions by 50-100% (Ritzer, 1995). The use of credit cards in Taiwan has also grown rapidly during the past decade. Based on recent

statistical data, the number of credit cards issued in Taiwan has reached 40 million, and each user holds an average of four cards (Directorate-General of Budget, 2003). Despite their convenience, the wide availability of such cards has created a problem of not repaying credit card expenses, leading to heavy losses for credit card companies (e.g., banks). Ross and Robertson (2000) stated that decision-making about ethical issues may harm one or more of the groups or individuals affected by the outcome of the decision. It appears that failure to repay credit card expenses can be regarded as an ethically questionable behavior in consumption (EQB; Fukukawa, 2002) due to its harmful outcomes. By realizing the cause of this questionable behavior, credit card companies can significantly reduce their losses.

Research on EQB comprises two streams (Fukukawa, 2002). The first stream concerns specific EQB, including tax evasion (e.g., Hessing, Elffers, & Weigel, 1988), shoplifting (e.g., Babin & Griffin, 1995; Krasnovsky & Lane, 1998), software piracy (e.g., Glass & Wood, 1996; Wagner & Sanders, 2001), and counterfeiting (e.g., Albers-Miller, 1999), while the second stream investigates consumer ethical judgments regarding EQB in different settings (Muncy & Vitell, 1992). Rallapalli et al. (1994) explored the relationship between individual personality and general ethical judgments. Additionally, previous studies (e.g., Barnett & Valentine, 2004; Bass et al., 1999; Chiu, 2003) indicated that there exist a positive relationship between ethical judgment for a specific action and behavioral intention. Vitell (2003) suggested that future studies on consumer ethics could examine the link between general ethical judgments and intentions and/or behavior. While interest in the influence of personality on behavior is growing, little attention is paid on the relationship between individual traits and the intention/behavior of not repaying credit card expenses. An important contribution of this study is to propose a model linking locus of control, risk-taking

propensity, general ethical judgments, and behavioral intention to not repay credit card expenses (hereafter 'behavioral intention to not repay'), and to empirically examine their relationships. Regarding the ethics of credit card use, this study strives to provide beneficial information for credit card companies.

Specifically, the current research is designed to examine the mediating processes which explains the linkages between personality and behavioral intention to not repay. That is, we attempt to see how the four dimensions of general ethical judgments (actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting at the expense of others, actively benefiting from questionable actions, and no harm/no foul) mediate the relationships between two well-established personality traits associated with ethical issues (locus of control (LOC) and risk-taking propensity) and behavioral intention to not repay. To investigate these relationships, data were collected from a large and diverse sample in Taiwan. The results will provide evidence regarding how personality traits influence general ethical judgments, how judgments make individuals more likely to have behavioral intention to not repay, and if personality directly affects behavioral intention to not repay.

三、結果與討論

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Participants

The data were collected by questionnaires. 448 usable ones from those holding credit cards in Taiwan (at least 20 years old) were obtained. Of the 448 credit cards consumers, 271 (60.5%) were male and 410 (91.5%) were 20~40 years old. The sample was highly educated, with 69.2% holding a college degree and 12.9% with a graduate degree. During the survey for this study, respondents were assured that all information would be kept confidential in order to increase the response rate and

acquire more accurate information. A convenience sample was used in this study, but sample diversification and sample relevance have been taken into account (Sackett & Larson, 1990).

3.1.2 Measures

Locus of control. We measured locus of control by using an abbreviated scale of LOC having 11 items developed by Barnett & Lanier (1995). Subjects were asked to respond to the items in the original forced-choice format by selecting the statement from each pair which best reflected their thoughts. A score of 0 was assigned to the “internal” statement and 1 to the “external” one. A person’s LOC was measured by summing his or her scores on 11 items. Scores for LOC ranged from 0 for an individual who selected all “internal” statements to 11 for an individual who selected all “external” statements.

Risk-taking propensity. Risk-taking propensity was adapted from the Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI; Jackson, 1976). A subset of the statements out of the original 20 items of the JPI were selected in such a way that they can better reflect culture heterogeneity. After successful pretests were completed, the scale for risk-taking propensity was composed of 11 statements. Respondents were asked to indicate “disagree” or “agree” to a series of 11 statements. A score of 0 was given for “disagree” and 1 for “agree” for each statement. The summation of responses yielded risk-taking propensity scores from 0 to 11.

General ethical judgments. The four basic consumer ethical dimensions given by Muncy and Vitell (1992) were used to represent the four subconstructs of general ethical judgments, based on which four scenarios regarding the ethics of credit card use were then developed. These four scenarios were examined by interviewing five credit card business representatives and three scholars with related expertise for appropriateness and clarity. Additionally,

pretests were conducted with ten business school graduate students. For each ethical scenario, we used three items in making ethical judgments (i.e., multidimensional measure) (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they perceived each ethical scenario as unjust/just, not morally right/morally right, and unacceptable/acceptable on a 7-point scale. We applied indirect questioning in designing each ethical scenario, which could reduce social desirability response bias (Fisher & Tellis, 1998). The order of the four scenarios was randomly determined for each respondent in order to avoid order effects.

Behavioral intention to not repay. Individual behavioral intentions can be measured by asking individuals to read scenarios that contain ethical dilemmas and then asking them to express the likelihood in a probability sense that they would perform the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Following previous studies, respondents were asked to read one scenario regarding not repaying credit card expenses and then assessed the likelihood that they would engage in this behavior. It was measured using a five-point scale anchored with “highly unlikely” (1) to “highly likely” (5). The other was a statement regarding actual behavioral intention to not repay anchored by “never” (1) to “always” (5).

Control variables. Two control variables, consumers’ age (with four levels) and education (with two levels), that potentially influence general ethical judgments and behavioral intention to not repay, were included in the analysis to refine our research results.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

The hypothesized relationships were simultaneously examined by using structural equation modeling (SEM). Following the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement model was first assessed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and then

the structural model was analyzed to test for the research hypotheses.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Tests for the Measurement Model

Reliabilities were assessed with coefficient alphas, and convergent and discriminant validities were assessed with CFA. There were two indicators for behavioral intention to not repay and three indicators for each dimension of the general ethical judgments. The coefficients alphas for behavioral intention to not repay, actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting at the expense of others, actively benefiting from questionable actions, and no harm were, respectively, .70, .85, .87, .89, and .94. It appears that the reliabilities are satisfactory. Furthermore, the loadings of the indicators on their corresponding constructs were all significant at the 0.01 level, demonstrating convergent validity. Convergent validities for LOC and risk-taking propensity were not evaluated since the scores for LOC and risk-taking propensity were obtained by adding the values of their associated items. The fit statistics resulting from CFA were as follows: GFI = .94; AGFI = .90; NFI = .94; CFI = .96; and RMSEA = .06.

We assessed discriminant validity for each pair of constructs by constraining the correlation coefficient between them to be 1.0 and then performing a chi-square difference test on the constrained and unconstrained models. Since there are seven constructs, under the experimentwise error rate of 0.01, the critical value of the chi-square test is $\chi^2(1, 0.01/21) = 12.19$ by using the Bonferroni method. The fact that the chi-square difference statistics for all pairs of constructs exceed 12.19 achieves discriminant validity.

3.2.2 Tests for the Structural Model

The tests for the structural model indicated that the effect of LOC on each of

the four dimensions of general ethical judgments was significantly positive, as was the effect of risk-taking propensity, the ethical judgment regarding actively benefiting from illegal activities and that regarding passively benefiting at the expense of others were significantly positively related to behavioral intention to not repay, neither the ethical judgment regarding actively benefiting from questionable actions nor the ethical judgment regarding no harm had significant effect on behavioral intention to not repay, and LOC had significant direct influence on behavioral intention to not repay.

Specifically, on the basis of the test for mediation (James and Brett, 1984), the ethical judgment regarding actively benefiting from illegal activities and that regarding passively benefiting at the expense of others partially mediated the relationship between LOC and behavioral intention to not repay, whereas these two ethical judgments completely mediated the relationship between risk-taking propensity and behavioral intention to not repay.

3.3 Discussions and Managerial Implications

Extending existing research on specific kind of EQB and ethical judgments, the proposed model suggests that LOC and risk-taking propensity impact behavioral intention to not repay through individual ethical judgments. The relationships were empirically justified for actively benefiting from illegal activities and passively benefiting at the expense of others.

The results of our study have some managerial implications. First, credit card companies' losses may be reduced if customers' personality traits are paid more attention, and a more mature credit card management system is built. Second, for those showing the tendency of actively benefiting from illegal activities, credit card companies should carefully examine their backgrounds and history about credit card use. Additionally, credit card companies

should not only provide better management on the credit card business such as customers' bills, but also should add some severe rules in order to restrain those having the tendency of passively not repaying.

In conclusion, our results support previous research demonstrating the importance of the relationship between ethical judgments and ethical behavioral intentions. It appears that general ethical judgments regarding actively benefiting from illegal activities and passively benefiting at the expense of others have impacts on individual's behavioral intention to not repay. Additionally, the results provide compelling evidences that LOC and risk-taking propensity can predict general ethical judgments, and in turn lead to behavioral intention to not repay. LOC can also directly affect the behavioral intention. Other antecedents of the behavioral intention to not repay and how actual action of not repaying is affected may be investigated in future research.

四、計畫成果自評

The contribution of the study is to reveal how the four dimensions of general ethical judgments (actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting at the expense of others, actively benefiting from questionable actions, and no harm/no foul) mediate the relationships between locus of control and risk-taking propensity and behavioral intention to not repay, and accordingly to provide managerial implications and suggestions.

A paper derived from the research results has been submitted to *Business Ethics Quarterly*, and is currently under review.

Note:

Based on deeper literature review and in-depth interviews, the research model proposed in the proposal has been modified. Materialism has been replaced by risk-taking propensity and the intention of overlimit use of credit cards replaced by intention to not repay. The modification can make research

results more meaningful.

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