

The fluent story

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Valorization Addendum

“V” for valorization addendum. In other words, the final piece, situated at the end of every dissertation. Not quite a part of the dissertation itself in terms of content, yet still it belongs in this book as it describes the added value the genesis of this particular dissertation created for the academic community and society at large.

Crafting this final piece called the valorization addendum warrants a closer look at the definition of the term “valorization”. (Establishing such working definitions certainly is common practice in academic circles and hence it shall not be missing in this piece): Knowledge valorization refers to the “process of creating value from knowledge, by making knowledge suitable and/or available for social (and/or economic) use and by making knowledge suitable for translation into competitive products, services, processes and new commercial activities” (definition derived from the ‘*Waardevol: Indicatoren voor Valorisatie*’ report by the National Valorisation Committee (2011), The Hague: Rathenau Institute, p. 8).

Having established and grasped both the definition and inherent goal of such a valorization addendum, the next step in crafting one is to think of the ways in which the content of this doctoral dissertation provides knowledge that is both suitable and available for social use.

Availability

The knowledge acquired in this dissertation will be printed and made publicly available through the internet, free for anyone to read. In fact chapter 4 is already published. Hence, I shall think that the point regarding availability of knowledge is covered. However, even though at first it seems as if this point is easily achieved, it warrants some further thoughts. What does availability mean in the context of science? And is all the knowledge I created truly available for everyone to access? The more I think about it, the less straightforward this answer becomes. In fact, chapter 3 of this dissertation touches a very related point as it talks about the topic of the file-drawer problem in science. The file-drawer problem means that only those studies that show a significant result are published. All the other failed attempts, are quickly pushed into the file drawer, where they will be forever withheld from the academic community and society at large. As a result, those studies that are available for society to read are those that are published. Yet, it is known that behind every published study lurk several insignificant attempts that go into the file drawer.

Going back to the valorization requirement, did I succeed in making knowledge available?

The short answer would be: Well, with a published chapter and a dissertation in print and digital form I shall say yes. The more detailed answer would be: Did I succeed in making all knowledge available? Well, you are free to attend my public defense and ask me about the studies that did not make it into my dissertation. Did I succeed in making my knowledge available to everyone? Chapter 4 is publicly available for a few months until it hides behind a paywall. When that happens, just ask me and I will e-mail it to you.

Suitability

While the assessment of whether or not the knowledge I created is available is relatively straight forward, the question regarding whether the knowledge I created is suitable is a much more difficult question that lies a bit more in the eye of the beholder.

I see two parties to whom this dissertation's knowledge should be suitable for. In this case: the academic community, this includes scholars in my field or related within the social sciences as well as the society at large, whose members do not continually read academic articles, nor conduct scientific research themselves in any form. My answer regarding whether my knowledge is suitable to these two parties is invariably is yes but for different reasons so.

In terms of the academic community, chapter 2 and 3 of this dissertation may be suitable for a creating awareness and knowledge within the scientific community, because it is (or relates to) a meta-analysis. Meta-analyses are an ever popular research method. More and more journals call for this momentary status quo assessment of a given research field. It gathers knowledge of a given research field that the scientific community itself created and gives an overarching verdict of where the research field currently stands, how big a given effect is and where the scientific community may move towards next. In fact meta-analysis are like sign post for researcher's, helping them navigated through the dense jungle of ever accumulating knowledge, indicating where to head next. Chapter 3 provides the application of a newly developed statistical tool to assess and potentially correct for publication bias. In other words, with chapter 3 I take a look in the resarchers' toolbox as they are on their way and assess how strong their tool is. Hence to answer the aforementioned question, it is particularly chapter 2 and chapter 3 that are suitable in creating relevant knowledge for the academic community.

In terms of the valorization of this dissertation's insights for the society as a whole I instantly think of chapter 4 much more than chapter 2 or 3, which relate, as explained above, more to members of the academic community. As already outlined in the introduction as well as discussion section of chapter 4 obesity worldwide is on the rise. The source for the rising obesity rate often lies in a maladaptive nutrition styles that favor high sugar level products. Plus, food is available much more frequently at all hours of the day (think of 24 hour delivery services). Needless to say that combatting obesity is a top priority for many countries. There are many methods to fight obesity, such as diets and exercise, but a particularly fruitful avenue to change peoples' eating habits is to make small adjustments in their immediate environment. Chapter 4 demonstrates how a small change in the consumer's immediate environment can have an impact on their eating habits. It shows how the presence of a logo can impact the levels of our consumption of snack items. It precisely shows the circumstances under which consumption levels rise or decrease. It

also provides the reader with a possible explanatory mechanism. Hence the topic of this dissertation and in particular chapter 4 shows a value for society: Health policy makers and nutritionists can glean from this dissertation that small micro changes such as logos (but also many more things, summarized in chapter 2's meta-analysis) can have a sustained effect on our consumption volume. Going into detail on chapter 4, clear, precise and hands on suggestions on what label (e.g. a simpler or a more complex logo or label) to attach to which food item (a healthy vs. a snack product) in order to curb or promote consumption are delivered. They are served with a scientifically tested idea specifically geared towards solving the issue of obesity. This insight in turn, can be used to shape competitive services. For example, a company could create a dieting program that uses this type of insight and offers specifically designed food products. Another group to whom this insight may be particularly useful is logo designers of big companies. Knowing about processing fluency and the conditions in which fluent logos work better over disfluent logos (all insights gleaned from chapter 2), logo designer can create logos accordingly. This shows that the knowledge from an academic piece of text, such as this dissertation can be transferred to the shaping of commercial products, a brand logo being part of them.

For those of you to whom this is all too speculative, I have a concrete example that I can relay from my experience working in market research. Sharing the insights of my dissertation to colleagues at two of the world's biggest market research agencies I can assure the reader that the topic of this dissertation and its insights are highly relevant and interesting for market researchers. Market research agencies constantly seek to create products to one-up the competition. In other words, they are always on the search for the next "big thing" in consumer insights. Traditionally, many of the established agencies make use of quite tried and tested, if not to say outdated methods, such as the iceberg model or more rarely system 1 and 2 thinking. Novel ways, or academic hot topics, such as processing fluency, are seen as a welcome updated addition to their way of thinking about the consumer and advertising. That is to say that processing fluency could be used as a new KPI, which is the market research firm's term for a dependent variable. To give an example, next to memorability, or liking, processing fluency could be used as an index for how well an advertisement is performing. As chapter 2 of this dissertation shows, fluent elements are desirable in particular situations. Hence, processing fluency can serve as a way to identify fluent points in a commercial. This shows how around these insights from the dissertation whole commercial products and services can be created. In sum, I showed that the knowledge from this dissertation is both suitable to the academic community and wide society as a whole. It is available for the general public to read and can be translated into shaping competitive products, services and processes.