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This research uses a dual attitudes perspective to offer new insights into flattery and its consequences. The authors show that even when flattery by marketing agents is accompanied by an obvious ulterior motive that leads targets to discount the proffered compliments, the initial favorable reaction (the implicit attitude) continues to coexist with the discounted evaluation (the explicit attitude). Furthermore, the implicit attitude has more influential consequences than the explicit attitude, highlighting the possible subtle impact of flattery even when a person has consciously corrected for it. The authors also clarify the underlying process by showing how and why the discrepancy between the implicit and explicit attitudes induced by flattery may be reduced. Collectively, the findings from this investigation provide implications for both flattery research and the dual attitudes literature.

Keywords: flattery, implicit attitudes, dual attitudes, persuasion, long-term consequences

Insincere Flattery Actually Works: A Dual Attitudes Perspective

Flattery—the art of offering pleasing compliments—is one of the oldest and most commonly used of persuasion methods. Research in this area provides a reason for the popularity of this tactic. Put simply, flattery works. Various studies have shown that the target of the flattery evaluates the flatterer positively because human beings have a basic desire to believe in good things about themselves (Fogg and Nass 1997; Gordon 1996; Vonk 2002).

What happens, however, in situations in which the flatterer is “bogus”—that is, when the recipient knows that the flatterer is offering an insincere compliment, presumably driven by an ulterior motive? Instances of insincere flattery abound in the marketing context, such as the salesperson who offers prospective customers profuse compliments on how an expensive outfit makes them look or mass mailings in which hundreds of consumers are informed that they are receiving the mail because they (and they alone) possess unique attributes—such as an impeccable dress sense—which allows them to appreciate the virtues of the service or store being advertised.

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In cases such as these, in which the prospective consumer is aware of a clear ulterior motive underlying the compliment, both research (e.g., Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Vonk 1998) and intuition suggest that recipients will discount the flattering comments and correct their otherwise favorable reactions. Though in partial agreement with this premise, the current investigation proposes that despite such correction, a positive impact of flattery may still be observed. Specifically, we draw on recent perspectives in dual attitudes theory to predict that even when the recipient consciously discounts an insincere compliment, the original positive reaction (the implicit attitude) coexists with, rather than is replaced by, the discounted evaluation (the explicit attitude). Either evaluation may then be manifested depending on conditions prevailing at the point of response.

In addition to showing that flattery can produce two coexisting attitudes, a major goal of this article is to establish that these two attitudes produce different effects; for example, we predict and show that the implicit attitude is more resistant to negative information and is also a better predictor of delayed behavior than the explicit attitude (though the reverse is true when behavior is measured right after attitudes). Thus, even when targets correct for flattery in their explicit responses, the insincere flattery may continue to exert subtle, insidious effects. Of theoretical significance, our examination of differential delayed consequences makes a contribution to the dual attitudes literature, which has not yet explored this important distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes. Finally, another contribution of this research is to

identify a theoretically derived boundary condition for the posited difference between the implicit and explicit attitudes produced by flattery. Doing so enables us both to add to the underlying dual attitudes conceptualization by showing when implicit and explicit attitudes converge (versus diverge) and to provide useful implications as to when the effects of flattery might be mitigated.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Consequences of Flattery

Flattery can be defined as “communicating positive things about another person without regard to that person’s true qualities or abilities” (Fogg and Nass 1997, p. 551). Considerable evidence accumulated through experiments (Fogg and Nass 1997; Vonk 2002), surveys (Higgins and Judge 2004), and meta-analyses (Gordon 1996) supports the thesis that flattery has a positive influence on the target’s judgments of the flatterer. Of relevance to this research, this definition of flattery allows for cases in which the positive information proceeds from an impersonal source; indeed, the impact of flattery has been documented even when it proceeds from an inanimate object (Fogg and Nass 1997). Various scholars have suggested that the self-enhancement motive is a crucial factor underlying the positive effects of flattery (Gordon 1996; Vonk 2002). Specifically, the target’s desire to think well of him- or herself drives him or her to respond favorably to the flatterer.

However, research in the consumer arena shows that targets can sometimes successfully resist flattery attempts. For example, in a set of studies, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) draw on a characterization-correction view (Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988) to show that when there is a highly accessible ulterior motive underlying the flattery (e.g., a salesperson offering a compliment to a potential customer before purchase), its effects are likely to be neutralized. In such cases, the target of the flattery can draw on previous knowledge of persuasion tactics by marketing agents (Friestad and Wright 1994) and attribute the compliment to the salient ulterior motive, thus correcting the otherwise positive impression that flattery might otherwise produce. Similarly, recent research by Main, Dahl, and Darke (2007) shows that a salesperson flattery scenario, in and of itself, produces suspicions of an ulterior motive, thus setting off a spontaneous discounting process that results in lowered evaluations.

Thus, although extant research suggests that flattery can induce a positive evaluative response in the target, this is not always the case. Under certain conditions, such as in a retail context in which there is a clear ulterior motive for the flattery, the initial favorable reaction is replaced by a less positive corrected response. We now draw on dual attitudes theory to suggest that even when such a correction takes place, the original positive evaluation continues to coexist along with the new discounted judgment. In addition, we contribute to the dual attitudes literature (while providing further insights into the effects of flattery) by showing that the initial positive reaction may actually exert a greater subsequent impact than the more deliberative corrected attitude.

The Role of Dual Attitudes

Following the surge of interest in implicit measures and processes in recent social cognition research (for a review, see Fazio and Olson 2003), new theories of attitudes (Petty, Brinol, and DeMarree 2007; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000) have recognized the important role of implicit attitudes. These may broadly be defined as evaluative reactions that are automatically activated on exposure and that often exist outside of a person’s awareness, as opposed to explicit judgments that the individual is aware of and whose expression can be consciously controlled (Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Rydell and McConnell 2006; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000).¹ It has been suggested that these two types of attitudes are the product of two systems of information processing, with explicit judgments resulting from logical, abstract reasoning and implicit judgments developing from simple association formation (Slooman 1996; Strack and Deutsch 2004).

Although there are many varied implications of the existence of implicit attitudes (Fazio and Olson 2003; Greenwald and Banaji 1995), a particularly fascinating perspective holds that implicit and explicit attitudes toward the same object may independently coexist in memory (Petty et al. 2006; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000). This view posits that following an attitude change, the new, explicit attitude does not always replace the preexisting attitude; rather, the original attitude may remain intact outside of awareness and become activated automatically on subsequent exposure to the object, thus functioning like an implicit reaction. In such cases, the newly formed explicit attitude will override the implicit attitude if, at the time of response, sufficient cognitive capacity is available for it to be retrieved and reported. However, when cognitive capacity at measurement is constrained, the automatically activated implicit attitude is likely to be reported; in other words, the person reverts to his or her original response to the attitude object (Hofmann et al. 2005; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000). In an empirical test of the model examining attitudes toward newly encountered people, Wilson and Lindsey (1998) study whether an initial attitude that respondents deemed to be “incorrect” (and therefore corrected) was still available for later retrieval. Their findings are consistent with the dual attitudes view: Although respondents reported the corrected explicit judgment when their attitudes were measured under unconstrained conditions, they reported their original implicit attitude when attitudes were measured under time pressure, suggesting that the two attitudes coexisted in memory.

Several other studies in both psychology (Dovidio et al. 1997; Petty et al. 2006) and consumer research (Brunel, Tietje, and Greenwald 2004; Honea, Morales, and Fitzsimons 2006) have also obtained evidence in support of the existence of such dual attitudes. Applying this perspective to the flattery context, we propose that targets can

¹As Petty, Brinol, and DeMarree (2007) point out, “automatic” versus “deliberative” attitudes may be a better way of capturing this distinction because implicit attitudes are typically assessed using measures of automatic evaluative association, while explicit attitudes are tapped using more deliberative measures. However, we have retained the implicit–explicit terminology in this article to be consistent with the original dual attitudes formulation (Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000).

develop two distinct attitudes after being exposed to a flattering comment. In particular, the self-enhancement motive should cause an immediate positive response (the implicit attitude). However, if an ulterior motive is salient, as in the retail context under study, a discounting mechanism should prevail, leading to the formation of a new, less positive (explicit) attitude. In a departure from traditional attitude theory, however, we hypothesize that rather than being replaced by this corrected attitude, the initial attitude continues to exist and can be observed on subsequent implicit measures, such as a capacity-constrained evaluative scale. Thus, we argue that the positive impact of flattery may still be observed even when the recipient has engaged in a correction process.

Relative Influence of Implicit Versus Explicit Attitudes

In addition to identifying two distinct flattery-induced attitudes, our research aims to demonstrate that the relatively positive implicit attitude can exert a considerable influence on subsequent outcomes. We examine two outcomes in particular, both of theoretical and practical interest: (1) the extent to which the initial attitude (implicit versus explicit) predicts delayed behavior and (2) the extent to which the two attitudes successfully resist negative information about the source of flattery.

Although the literature on dual attitudes has not yet, to our knowledge, examined the relative influence of implicit versus explicit attitudes on delayed outcomes, the theory holds that implicit attitudes are effortlessly activated on exposure to the attitude object, while explicit attitudes require effort for retrieval; in other words, implicit attitudes are substantially more accessible (Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000). We ally this premise with the literature on attitude accessibility, which posits that highly accessible attitudes are automatically retrieved even on subsequent exposure to the attitude object and, accordingly, exert a relatively greater influence on delayed responses (Fazio 1995; Sengupta and Fitzsimons 2004; Zanna, Fazio, and Ross 1994). Combining these ideas, we predict that the implicit attitude resulting from flattery should be a better predictor of delayed behavior than the explicit judgment.

Of interest, prior work in the dual attitudes area has obtained the opposite results for behavior that is assessed immediately after attitude measurement, with explicit attitudes proving to be a better predictor of behavior in such cases than implicit attitudes (Dovidio et al. 1997; Rydell and McConnell 2006). Although our focus is on predicting delayed behavior, we specifically address this issue in Experiment 2 and provide a reconciliation of the different predictions for the case of immediate versus delayed behavior, thus adding to the current state of knowledge in the dual attitudes literature.

In addition to influencing delayed consequences, another important attitudinal outcome pertains to the extent to which an initial attitude is able to resist counterattitudinal information (Krosnick and Petty 1995). For example, in the context under study, a consumer may initially receive a flattering comment from a store agent, leading to the formation of an implicit and an explicit attitude; later, the same consumer hears a friend comment that the staff in

that store is particularly unhelpful. Which of the two initial attitudes will change more in response to this sort of negative information? While this issue has not been studied thus far in the consumer domain, or in a flattery context, some recent research in psychology suggests that explicit attitudes should be more susceptible to such an attack (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2006; Gregg, Seibt, and Banaji 2006). This prediction derives from the conceptualization of dual attitudes as the product of different learning systems (Sloman 1996). The associative learning system, which underlies implicit attitudes, is not concerned with assessing the truth value of incoming information; accordingly, when an association is formed, it tends to be relatively inflexible to new information. Conversely, the propositional reasoning system that underlies explicit attitudes processes information in terms of its truth value and therefore is more flexible in the sense of yielding to the effects of new information (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2006). Thus, it is the explicit attitude that will typically be more susceptible to counterattitudinal information (however, implicit attitudes may be susceptible to certain specific forms of attack, an issue that we return to in the "General Discussion").

Boundary Conditions for the Divergence Between Implicit and Explicit Attitudes

A final goal of this research is to identify a theoretically derived boundary condition for the hypothesized difference between implicit and explicit attitudes resulting from flattery. According to our conceptualization, the reason that flattery should produce a relatively positive implicit attitude (compared with the discounted explicit attitude) has to do with a self-enhancement motive—namely, a person's desire to think positively about him- or herself induces an instantaneous favorable reaction in the target, without any consideration for whether the flattery arises from ulterior motives. If so, the positive impact of flattery on implicit attitudes should be diluted when the self-enhancement motive is less important, such as when people have already engaged in self-affirmation before the flattery, thus reducing their need for further enhancement. This prediction is new to the flattery literature, though some suggestive evidence exists in research on the name-letter effect, which refers to the inherent liking that people have for letters corresponding to their names (e.g., a person named Michael is likely to prefer the letter "M" over other letters; Brendl et al. 2005; Jones, Pelham, and Mirenberg 2002). The name-letter effect is also presumed to arise from self-enhancement motives, and research in the area has shown that prior self-affirmation diminishes the effect. For example, Brendl and colleagues (2005) show that when respondents were first asked to write about a personal strength that affirmed their positive self, they subsequently did not display the name-letter effect, though a strong effect was evident when participants were asked to write about a personal flaw that threatened their positive self-view (see also Jones, Pelham, and Mirenberg 2002). Along similar lines, therefore, we propose that the positive influence of flattery on implicit attitudes should be reduced (and the difference between implicit and explicit attitudes thus diminished) when people engage in a self-affirmation task before being flattered.

In summary, this research attempts (1) to establish that flattery induces dual attitudes, with the implicit attitude typically being more favorable than the explicit attitude; (2) to investigate how implicit and explicit attitudes differentially affect subsequent responses; and (3) to identify a theoretically derived boundary condition for this difference. We examine our hypotheses across four studies.

EXPERIMENT 1A

Overview and Design

We conducted Experiment 1a to provide support for the hypothesis that in a store-related persuasion context containing a clear ulterior motive, flattery will induce dual attitudes, with the implicit attitude being more favorable than the explicit one. Furthermore, we expected that the implicit attitude would be a better predictor of delayed purchase intentions than the explicit attitude. Fifty-five students participated in the experiment for a payment of HK\$100 (approximately US\$12). We used a two-level (measures: explicit versus implicit) between-subjects design. All participants were exposed to the same overtly flattering message, couched in the form of direct mail from a retail store that was interested in their custom. Given this ulterior motive, we expected that participants would discount the flattery in their judgments of the store. Subsequently, we measured store attitudes under capacity-constrained or unconstrained conditions. If only the single (corrected) evaluation is available in memory, the same evaluation should be reported on the attitude scales, regardless of constraints at measurement. However, if, as we predict, flattery produces dual attitudes, the measurement method should make a difference, with the more (less) favorable implicit (explicit) attitude being reported under constrained (unconstrained) measurement.² Finally, we collected purchase intention data after a three-day delay.

Procedure

Participants were told that the study would be conducted in two parts, with the second stage to be held three days after the first. In the initial session, all participants were first told that they would be asked to provide their evaluations of a department store. They were then given a two-page booklet, the first page of which asked them to imagine that they had personally received a leaflet from a new department store in the region. On the next page, participants read the contents of this leaflet, titled “Don’t Miss the Grand Opening of PerfectStore!” They were told to take as much time as they needed to read through the note. The first paragraph of the leaflet focused on providing some information about the store itself (e.g., “Our store will feature a wide array of clothing brands, including several famous American, European and Japanese designer

labels”). The second paragraph contained overtly flattering comments about the participants: “We are contacting you directly because we know that you are a fashionable and stylish person. Your dress sense is not only classy but also chic. As someone with exceptional taste in clothes, you will enjoy the designs featured in our new collection, featuring ‘must-haves’ for the coming season.” The leaflet ended with a highlighted request to visit the department store in the near future.

To check that the leaflet induction was perceived as a form of flattery (and that the accompanying ulterior motive was also perceptible), we conducted a pretest with 25 other participants, who were given the same two-page booklet containing the leaflet. They were then asked which of the following options best described the contents of the leaflet: (1) flattery with ulterior motive, (2) flattery with no ulterior motive, (3) no flattery with ulterior motive, and (4) no flattery with no ulterior motive. Consistent with expectations, 19 of 25 participants (76%) described the leaflet as containing flattery with ulterior motive (4 people circled Option 2, and 2 people circled Option 3).

As an additional check on perceptions of the ulterior motive, participants also indicated the extent to which they “disagreed” (1) or “agreed” (9) that (1) the leaflet was trying to persuade them to visit the store, (2) PerfectStore would gain from commenting on their fashion sense, and (3) the leaflet was aimed at persuading them to buy PerfectStore’s products ($\alpha = .73$). The mean on this index ($M = 6.44$) was comfortably above the midpoint of the scale. Overall, the pretest suggests that the leaflet induction was indeed perceived as flattery and that participants could detect the store’s underlying ulterior motive.

Note that our leaflet-based flattery induction differs from some prior work in that it involves a relatively impersonal mail from the store—of the type that consumers often receive as mass mailings—rather than an interpersonal conversation. (Campbell and Kirmani [2000] also used scenarios, but they required participants to imagine an interaction with an individual salesperson.) However, the relative lack of a personal touch provides a stronger test of the key hypothesis being examined in this study—namely, that respondents will still develop a positive implicit attitude toward the store. A similar justification applies with regard to using a scenario-based method instead of a field study involving an actual interaction (see Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007). The cognitive requirements of taking part in a real interaction have been shown to detract from the target’s ability to detect the ulterior motive underlying the flattery (Gordon 1996). Conversely, because the scenario method “removes” the target to some extent from the interaction, it is more likely to allow participants to identify an ulterior motive; again, this should make it more difficult to detect the relatively favorable implicit attitude in our studies.

Returning to the main study, after participants finished reading the leaflet, they were told that they would answer some questions related to PerfectStore on the computer screen by pressing the appropriate number key (e.g., from 1 to 9) on the keyboard. In the implicit measure condition, they were required to respond to the questions by pressing their desired key within five seconds of the question appearing on the screen; if they failed to do this, the screen automatically went to the next question.

²To provide a stronger test of the key hypothesis regarding a dissociation between implicit and explicit attitudes, we assessed these two attitudes using similar evaluative measures (instead of, for example, measuring implicit attitudes using the implicit association test, in which case the difference in methods would have lent itself to a dissociation with explicit attitudes; Fazio and Olson 2003).

In contrast, participants in the explicit measure condition were told that they could take as much time as they wanted to respond to the questions (for similar measures of implicit versus explicit evaluations, see Honea, Morales, and Fitzsimons 2006; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000). In both conditions, participants answered five practice questions to get them prepared (e.g., “What was the name of the store featured in the leaflet?”). Next, they were asked about their reactions toward the store. A two-item measure first assessed attitudes toward PerfectStore (1 = “dislike very much/extremely unfavorable,” and 9 = “like very much/extremely favorable”; $r > .72$). Next, a three-item measure assessed the perceived sincerity of the store (1 = “not at all sincere/credible/trustworthy,” and 9 = “extremely sincere/credible/trustworthy”; $\alpha = .81$). We counterbalanced the order of the attitude and sincerity measures, and there was no effect of ordering on the measures. The first session ended here.

After three days, participants returned to the lab for the second session of the study. They were reminded briefly that in the first session, they had provided their reactions toward PerfectStore. Subsequently, as a measure of delayed behavioral intention, they were asked (1) how likely it was that they would buy clothes from the store and (2) how likely it was that they would join the loyalty club of the store (1 = “not at all likely,” and 9 = “extremely likely”; $r = .62$). We assessed behavioral intention in exactly the same way for all participants, and therefore we did not expect it to differ as a function of whether initial attitudes three days ago had been measured implicitly versus explicitly. Rather, our prediction addressed the relative strength of the attitude–intention link, such that we expected a stronger link (i.e., a greater correlation) for implicit attitudes and behavioral intentions than for explicit attitudes and behavioral intentions. Note also that despite the predicted difference between initial implicit and explicit attitudes, we expected a relatively low correlation between explicit attitudes and intentions; thus, the predicted attitude difference would not necessarily be mirrored in mean intention differences at delay.

Subsequently, to check whether participants realized the persuasion intention underlying the flattering comments, we asked them to indicate on a nine-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” and 9 = “strongly agree”) whether they thought that PerfectStore had anything to gain from the complimentary remarks contained in the leaflet handed out previously. Finally, they were asked to indicate their gender (which had no effect on the results reported here or in the following studies; thus, we do not discuss it further).

Results

We analyzed the data in the context of a one-way two-level (measure: explicit versus implicit) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Because all participants received the same overtly flattering note from the store, which was accompanied by a request to visit the store, we expected that the ulterior motive would be salient throughout; that is, participants in both conditions should demonstrate a realization of the store’s intention to persuade them. In accordance, means on the measure of persuasion intention were equivalent in the two conditions ($M_{\text{explicit}} = 6.24$, $M_{\text{implicit}} = 6.19$;

$F < 1$), and both scores were above the midpoint of the scale. Next, as a check for the time-constraint manipulation, we found that respondents took significantly longer to provide explicit reactions ($M = 5834.8$ milliseconds) versus implicit reactions ($M = 2820.9$ milliseconds; $F(1, 53) = 38.55$, $p < .001$)—a pattern that prevailed in all our studies.

Our key hypothesis was that if flattery creates dual attitudes, there should be a difference between the implicit and explicit measures of attitude; furthermore, we expected the former to be more favorable. In support of this, analyses revealed the predicted effect of measure type ($F(1, 53) = 4.03$, $p < .05$). As we expected, the flattering note from the store induced a more positive implicit ($M = 5.71$) than explicit ($M = 5.02$) evaluation. We obtained exactly the same pattern of results for perceptions of the store’s sincerity: The implicit measure of sincerity was significantly higher ($M = 5.35$) than the explicit measure ($M = 4.55$; $F(1, 53) = 6.17$, $p < .05$).

Next, we examined the extent to which implicit versus explicit attitudes predicted delayed behavioral intentions. As noted previously, we did not expect the behavioral intention itself to differ across conditions, an expectation borne out by the results ($M_{\text{explicit}} = 5.19$, $M_{\text{implicit}} = 5.12$; $F < 1$, not significant [n.s.]). The key prediction, however, was that intention would correlate more strongly with the implicit attitude measure than with the explicit attitude measure. Analyses of the attitude–intention correlations revealed an effect of condition ($F(1, 53) = 4.10$, $p < .05$). As we hypothesized, the delayed behavioral intention was significantly more correlated with the implicit attitude ($r = .75$, $p < .001$) than with the explicit attitude ($r = .14$, n.s.).

EXPERIMENT 1B

Procedure and Results

We ran a follow-up study to replicate the finding that flattery induces dual attitudes, this time using within-subjects measurement. The procedure followed was similar to that used in Experiment 1a. All participants ($n = 66$) read the leaflet from PerfectStore containing the same overtly flattering comments. In a departure from Experiment 1a, all participants were then asked to provide evaluations under both time-constrained (implicit attitudes) and time-unconstrained (explicit attitudes) conditions. The method for implicit attitude measurement was the same as before, with participants providing computerized responses to two nine-point attitude items (“like/dislike” and “unfavorable/favorable”; $r = .87$) in a maximum of five seconds per item. Following a five-minute filler task, we collected a time-unconstrained (i.e., explicit) measure of attitudes with a pen-and-paper method, in which participants were given unlimited time to provide reactions on two further nine-point evaluation measures (“bad/good” and “poor/excellent”; $r = .81$). We counterbalanced the order of implicit and explicit attitude measurement; of importance, the ordering had no influence on results. We did not measure sincerity perceptions in this study given the within-subjects format, because taking repeated measures on both attitudes and sincerity might have produced demand effects, thus artificially inflating the correspondence between implicit and explicit responses.

Confirming the findings we obtained with the between-subjects method used in Experiment 1a, the results again revealed that the implicit attitude resulting from flattery ($M = 5.06$) was higher than the explicit attitude ($M = 4.33$; $F(1, 64) = 17.14$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, we obtained this pattern of results for both measurement orders—that is, both when implicit attitudes were measured before explicit attitudes ($M_{\text{explicit}} = 4.37$, $M_{\text{implicit}} = 5.01$; $F(1, 32) = 9.96$, $p < .001$) and when they were measured after explicit attitudes ($M_{\text{explicit}} = 4.29$, $M_{\text{implicit}} = 5.11$; $F(1, 32) = 20.04$, $p < .001$). The latter finding is particularly reassuring evidence of the existence of dual attitudes. It refutes an alternative possibility, one based on a unitary rather than a dual view of attitudes—namely, that after a deliberative (explicit) judgment has been formed and reported, it is the only attitude that is then available for use. If this were the case, we would have found no difference between the implicit and explicit measures when the explicit measure was assessed first, because the deliberative judgment would have been reported again on the subsequent time-constrained measure. However, we nevertheless obtained a discrepancy, which speaks to the existence of dual attitudes (for similar evidence regarding dual attitudes, see Honea, Morales, and Fitzsimons 2006).

Discussion

The results from both experiments yielded initial evidence that flattery in a sales context can induce dual evaluations and provided implications for marketing agents who use ingratiation as a persuasion tactic. The pattern of findings we obtained suggests that a relatively favorable implicit reaction coexists with the corrected explicit reaction, rather than being replaced by the latter. Of interest, we observed these favorable implicit judgments despite the impersonal nature of the flattering communication (a store leaflet) and the presence of a clear ulterior motive (i.e., requesting recipients to visit the store). From the communicator's perspective, therefore, all may not be lost even when recipients (e.g., prospective consumers) detect and correct for the flattery in their explicit judgments.³

Note that our results both are consistent with and extend related research in this area, which has shown that flattery is likely to be discounted when a clear ulterior motive is detected (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007). Our findings do not contradict the likelihood of such a discounting mechanism; rather, the explicit reactions documented in the current studies are in agreement with a discounting view. However, our results also suggest that even after discounting, the initial positive reaction to flattery does not get wiped out; instead, it coexists with the discounted evaluation and is manifested when the appropriate measure is used.

³We also replicated this basic finding (better implicit versus explicit attitudes) across a different operationalization of store flattery involving false feedback on a personality survey. Of interest, comparisons with a no-flattery control showed that flattery exerts an influence by enhancing implicit attitudes, not by lowering explicit attitudes. Although we omitted this study for space reasons, we briefly describe it in the "General Discussion."

In this regard, it should be kept in mind that the setup used in our studies was highly conducive to flattery being discounted. Prior research has shown that the presence of a salient ulterior motive can be sufficient in itself to induce suspicion and set off a correction process (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007). Furthermore, although such discounting has been documented even when capacity is relatively constrained during processing (e.g., when participants were simultaneously required to perform a secondary task while reading the flattering communication; Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007), it is even more likely to occur when there is greater opportunity to process the flattering communication (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). In the current studies, not only was a clear ulterior motive provided, but participants also were not distracted while processing the leaflet information⁴; on the contrary, they were explicitly told to take as much time as they needed to read the leaflet. Nevertheless, we found evidence for a relatively favorable implicit reaction, along with the discounted explicit judgment.

While the identification of dual attitudes provides insights into the substantive domain of flattery, an important theoretical contribution of these results lies in showing that the implicit attitude is a better predictor of delayed behavioral intentions than the explicit attitude (Experiment 1a). This result informs the dual attitudes literature, which has not as yet examined the delayed behavioral influence of implicit versus explicit attitudes. Experiment 2 delves further into the relative impact of implicit versus explicit attitudes on behavior and also attempts to reconcile an intriguing discrepancy with some prior findings. Prior work on this issue in the dual attitudes arena has examined effects with regard to immediate behavior, finding support for a correspondence perspective—namely, implicit (versus explicit) attitudes are better predictors of spontaneous, uncontrolled behaviors that are not subject to conscious monitoring, such as body language (Dovidio et al. 1997), the distance a person chooses to sit from the attitude object (Rydell and McConnell 2006), and so forth. However, explicit attitudes have been shown to better predict deliberative, controlled behaviors, such as self-reported behavioral intentions and attractiveness ratings (Dovidio et al. 1997; Rydell and McConnell 2006). The rationale for such findings is that respondents view explicit measures of behavior as a reflection of their deliberative intent toward the attitude object, and thus they are motivated to recruit their explicit attitudes while responding to the behavioral measure. Consequently, the explicit attitude overrides the

⁴An important procedural difference between the current research and prior research, which stems from a difference in theoretical paradigms, should also be noted. Prior work (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007) has manipulated cognitive capacity at the time of processing information (not measurement), with greater processing capacity typically producing greater discounting of flattery. The key underlying premise in this paradigm is that only one or the other evaluation (discounted or nondiscounted) is formed during processing and is available for subsequent reporting. In contrast, the current research follows the dual attitudes paradigm and manipulates cognitive capacity at the point of measurement, not processing; the key underlying premise here is that dual attitudes are formed during processing, and either evaluation may then be reported depending on the capacity available at measurement (Hofmann et al. 2005; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000).

implicit attitude that is automatically activated on exposure to the object (Petty, Fazio, and Brinol 2008; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000).

The behavioral intention measure used in our study (e.g., likelihood of shopping at the store) was clearly of a deliberative, controlled nature; however, we found that the implicit attitude better predicted this intention than the explicit attitude. We suggest that a resolution of this discrepancy with prior research has to do with the significant delay between the measurement of attitude and intention in our study. When behavior is measured immediately after attitudes (as has been the case in prior research), even though the implicit attitude presumably enjoys greater accessibility, the recently formed explicit attitude should also be fairly accessible because of a recency effect (Bargh et al. 1992). Therefore, respondents not only will be motivated to recruit the explicit attitude while responding to an explicit behavioral measure but also will be able to do so because the explicit attitude is sufficiently accessible (note that the dual attitudes model allows for an explicit attitude to override a more accessible implicit attitude, but only if the former is sufficiently active and the person is motivated to recruit it; Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler 2000). Over time, however, the accessibility of explicit attitudes tends to be further diminished (Fazio 1995; Sengupta and Fitzsimons 2004). Therefore, when a person responds to a behavioral measure following a delay, it is less likely that the explicit attitude will be sufficiently active to override the implicit attitude, which is held to be automatically activated on exposure to the attitude object. Accordingly, these delayed behaviors are more likely to be guided by the implicit attitude. In other words, the accessibility advantage of the implicit attitude in guiding behavior is more likely to be manifested over a delay.

We conducted Experiment 2 to examine the moderating influence of a time delay on the relative influence of implicit versus explicit attitudes on explicitly measured behavior. This study had two other goals as well: First, to enhance the generalizability and applicability of our findings, we used an actual measure of choice behavior rather than behavioral intentions. Second, this experiment attempted to rule out an alternative explanation (described subsequently) for the prediction that implicit attitudes predict delayed behavior better than explicit attitudes.

EXPERIMENT 2

Design and Procedure

We used a 2 (measures: explicit versus implicit) \times 2 (timing of behavior: immediate versus delayed) between-subjects design in the study, in addition to a control group, which we describe subsequently (total $n = 200$). The procedure in the four experimental conditions was similar to that in Experiment 1a. All participants first read the flattering leaflet from PerfectStore and then provided store evaluations, either implicitly (time constrained) or explicitly (time unconstrained). Because we established the equivalence of results obtained using a between-subjects versus within-subjects measurement of dual attitudes in Experiment 1, the remaining studies rely on between-subjects measurement (e.g., Wilson and Lindsey 1998; Wilson, Lindsey, and

Anderson 1998) to minimize the contamination effects that are a potential problem with within-subjects studies. Store evaluation items in all conditions consisted of both attitudes toward PerfectStore (1 = "dislike very much," and 9 = "like very much") and its perceived sincerity (1 = "not at all credible/trustworthy," and 9 = "extremely credible/trustworthy"). Because Experiment 1a obtained parallel results on attitudes and sincerity, we pooled these three items, which loaded on to the same factor, to create a composite evaluation index ($\alpha = .76$); the pattern of results remained the same when we analyzed attitude and sincerity separately.

After providing store evaluations, participants responded to behavioral measures, either immediately or after returning to the lab three days later. To tap behavioral intentions, they were asked about their likelihood of shopping at PerfectStore and of going to a fashion show hosted by the store (1 = "not at all likely," and 9 = "extremely likely"; $r = .65$). The critical choice measure then followed. Participants were then told that to thank them for their participation, free store coupons worth HK\$50 would be given away. These store coupons were ostensibly provided by two stores: PerfectStore (the source of flattery) and RovoStore—a store that was introduced at this point and described along similar dimensions as PerfectStore (e.g., "will carry a selection of brands in different price ranges") but without any accompanying flattery. Printouts of two visually distinct store coupons were presented on the next page, and participants were asked to choose between them. They were also reminded that both stores were real and that their names had been disguised for reasons of confidentiality.

Following the choice measure, participants responded to items assessing their perceptions of the original store leaflet. As with the choice measure, we measured these items either in the first session or after the three-day delay. First, they were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to two items asking whether the leaflet (1) contained an attempt to flatter them and (2) had a hidden motive, such as the wish to make a sale. Next, they were asked the extent to which they agreed with each of the following statements: (1) "The leaflet said 'you are a fashionable and stylish person' because the store was trying to make a sale," (2) "The comment on your fashion sense was deliberately designed to make you feel good about the company itself," and (3) "The leaflet was aimed at persuading you to buy PerfectStore's products" (1 = "strongly disagree," and 9 = "strongly agree"). We created a continuous measure of persuasion intention by averaging these three items ($\alpha = .78$).

Results

Leaflet perceptions. We expected that participants in all conditions would perceive the store leaflet as employing flattery. Of the 132 participants in the experimental conditions, 94 (71%) responded affirmatively to the item asking if the leaflet contained flattery, and 83% responded to the subsequent item asking about a hidden motive. Furthermore, the mean on the nine-point continuous measure of persuasion intention was comfortably above the midpoint of the scale ($M = 6.96$). In summary, participants indeed perceived that the store was attempting to flatter them and

that it had an ulterior motive for doing so. We obtained no significant effects (of measure type, timing, or their interaction) on any of these leaflet perceptions.

Store evaluations. We analyzed the data in a 2 (measure: explicit versus implicit) \times 2 (timing of behavior: immediate versus delayed) ANOVA. As we expected, and replicating our previous results, there was only a main effect of measure type ($F(1, 128) = 9.45, p < .01$), such that participants provided more favorable evaluations when responding implicitly ($M = 5.18$) than explicitly ($M = 4.37$).

Immediate versus delayed behavior. We expected the explicit (implicit) attitude to be a better predictor of immediate (delayed) behavior. Furthermore, because the implicit attitude was more positive than the explicit attitude, behavior toward the store should also be more positive in the delayed than in the immediate choice condition. In accordance, participants were more likely to choose the coupon from PerfectStore after a delay ($M = 80\%$) than immediately ($M = 64\%$; $\chi^2 = 5.05, p < .05$). Next, to examine the influence of implicit versus explicit attitudes on behavior, we analyzed the dichotomous coupon choice variable in the context of a 2 (measure: explicit versus implicit) \times 2 (timing of measure: immediate versus delayed) \times attitude score (continuous measure) logistic regression. We obtained a significant three-way interaction ($\chi^2 = 9.27, p < .01$). Simple slopes analyses in the immediate condition revealed that, consistent with prior research, the explicit attitude predicted immediate choice better ($\beta = .99, t = 2.72, p < .01$) than the implicit attitude ($\beta = .11, t < 1, n.s.$); the two-way interaction was significant ($\chi^2 = 6.82, p < .01$). In contrast, and in line with our conceptualization (and with Experiment 1a), the implicit attitude was a better predictor of delayed choice ($\beta = 1.82, t = 2.67, p < .01$) than the explicit attitude ($\beta = .23, t < 1, n.s.$); again, the two-way interaction was significant ($\chi^2 = 5.87, p < .05$; see Figure 1). Finally, we obtained exactly the same pattern with regard to behavioral intentions. When measured immediately after attitudes, behavioral intention was significantly more correlated with the explicit attitude ($r = .67, p < .001$) than with the implicit attitude ($r = .24, n.s.$; $F(1, 128) = 5.11, p < .05$), while the reverse was true for delayed behavioral intention ($r_{\text{implicit}} = .69, p_{\text{implicit}} < .001$; $r_{\text{explicit}} = .20, n.s.$; $F(1, 128) = 5.94, p < .05$).

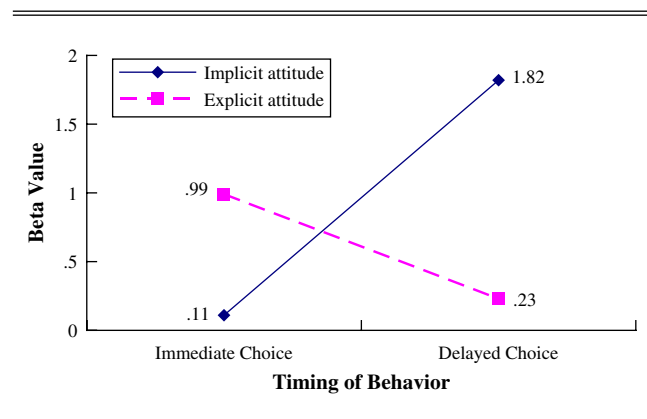
Alternative explanation. Although our explanation for the stronger relationship between implicit (versus explicit) initial attitudes and delayed behavior is based on the premise that the implicit attitude remains comparatively accessible over time, an alternative explanation is that perceptions of persuasive intent become dissociated from the store over time, and accordingly, behavioral decisions at delay are constructed simply on the basis of attribute information about the store. Because the attribute information about PerfectStore that was provided to all respondents at Time 1 was positive (e.g., “wide array of clothes,” “designer labels”), it may be that recalling this information leads respondents to engage in positive behavior toward the store (e.g., choosing its coupon rather than the other store’s). Thus, this alternative view argues that the strong relationship between the initial implicit attitude and the delayed behavior is due to a measurement artifact: The initial implicit attitude is relatively positive, and so is the delayed store choice.

The control condition we included in the study attempted to assess this alternative explanation. Participants ($n = 68$) in this condition made a choice between the two store coupons (PerfectStore versus Rovo) based only on the attribute information about the two stores. Thus, they first received the same leaflet from PerfectStore that we used in the main study, the only difference being that the leaflet did not include any flattering message; it just described the store. Next, they were provided with the information about the competing store (Rovo), and finally, as in the main study, they were asked to make a choice between the two store coupons. To maximize the influence of attribute information itself on choice, we took no intervening attitude measures. If default choice based only on attribute information favors PerfectStore, the choice data in this control condition should mirror the data obtained in the delayed condition of the main study. However, arguing against the dissociation-based alternative explanation, the results revealed that choice of the PerfectStore coupon was significantly lower in this control condition ($M = 59\%$) than in the delay condition ($M = 80\%$; $\chi^2 = 5.46, p < .05$). Additional evidence against the dissociation thesis comes from the manipulation checks included in the main study. As we reported previously, timing of measurement had no impact on any of the items that measured perceptions of the store’s persuasion intent; for example, scores on the continuous index of persuasive intent were as high at delay as when measured immediately ($M_{\text{immediate}} = 6.85, M_{\text{delayed}} = 7.06$; $F < 1, n.s.$). Thus, even when participants were asked at delay, they realized that the store had an ulterior motive underlying the flattering leaflet, arguing against the dissociation viewpoint.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated our prior findings, showing that the implicit attitude produced by flattery better predicts delayed behavior than the explicit attitude; furthermore, these results held in the context of actual choice, thus enhancing their applicability. Of particular interest from a

Figure 1
EXPERIMENT 2: PREDICTIVE VALUE OF IMPLICIT VERSUS EXPLICIT ATTITUDES ON IMMEDIATE AND DELAYED BEHAVIOR



theoretical viewpoint, this study also provided a reconciliation with some prior results in the dual attitudes literature, which has shown that explicit attitudes are a better predictor of explicitly measured behavior (of the type assessed in our research) than implicit attitudes. We found evidence for such a pattern when we measured behavior immediately after attitude measurement; however, in line with our conceptualization, there was a reversal after a delay, with implicit attitudes now predicting behavior significantly better than explicit attitudes. This resolution of opposing findings makes a contribution to the dual attitudes literature. Relatedly, our focus on examining delayed behavior enabled us to show that implicit (versus explicit) attitudes can actually be a better predictor of even explicitly measured behavior, an insight that is new to the literature. Finally, Experiment 2 helped rule out a dissociation-based alternative explanation for the greater impact of implicit attitudes on delayed behavior.

Thus far, the studies have examined the behavioral consequences of implicit versus explicit attitudes. Experiment 3 examines a different consequence—namely, the degree to which the implicit (versus explicit) attitude induced by flattery can withstand subsequent negative information about the flatterer. Our theorizing suggests that the implicit attitude should be more resistant to such an attack. In addition, Experiment 3 attempts to provide more detailed insights into the nature of the dual attitudes induced by flattery by identifying a boundary condition for the discrepancy between implicit and explicit attitudes. Given our argument that flattery increases implicit attitudes because of a need for self-enhancement, such an increase should be unlikely if the self-enhancement need has already been satisfied before flattery.

EXPERIMENT 3

Design and Procedure

Experiment 3 examines flattery-induced dual attitudes in the context of a 2 (self-esteem: threat versus affirmation) \times 2 (measures: explicit versus implicit) design. We hypothesize that the usual pattern (more favorable implicit versus explicit attitude) should be obtained for people whose self-esteem is threatened but that implicit and explicit attitudes should coincide for those whose self-esteem is affirmed. Furthermore, this study measures implicit and explicit attitudes at two points: after the flattery and then after subsequent exposure to negative information about the flatterer. The pattern of attitude change provides an indication of resistance to the new information.

Participants ($n = 105$) were told that the study involved two separate studies. Stage 1 involved the self-esteem manipulation, which closely followed a procedure used by Jones, Pelham, and Mirenberg (2002). Specifically, participants in the self-affirmation (self-threat) condition were asked to write about a positive aspect of themselves (or an aspect of themselves they wanted to change). Stage 2 involved the flattery manipulation and measurement of dependent variables. We used the same procedure as in our prior studies; namely, participants read a leaflet from PerfectStore, which, apart from providing some store details,

complimented them on their fashion sense. This was followed by a computer-based assessment of store evaluations, measured either implicitly or explicitly. The evaluation assessment comprised a three-item composite measure of attitude and perceived sincerity ($\alpha = .88$). The computer task ended at this point, and all participants were given another booklet, which contained unrelated filler tasks that took approximately ten minutes to complete. Subsequently, they were given another booklet, which contained information carrying negative connotations about the department store (e.g., unhelpful staff, restricted range of clothes), purporting to be from a shopper who had recently been to the store. Finally, participants were again asked to provide their evaluations of the store on the computer; these evaluations were again assessed either implicitly or explicitly, corresponding to the measurement method used in the first stage.

Results

We examined the data in the context of a 2 (self-esteem: threat versus self-affirmation) \times 2 (measures: explicit versus implicit) ANOVA. We obtained a significant interaction on initial (i.e., postflattery) evaluations ($F(1, 101) = 4.25, p < .05$). As we hypothesized, when participants' self-esteem was threatened, the flattering note from the company induced a more positive implicit ($M = 5.14$) than explicit ($M = 4.32$; $F(1, 101) = 5.66, p < .05$) evaluation. Of more importance, the implicit ($M = 4.19$) and explicit ($M = 4.41$; $F < 1, n.s.$) evaluations did not differ from each other when participants' self-esteem was affirmed; as we predicted, this equivalence arose because self-affirmation led to a drop in implicit evaluations compared with the self-threat condition ($M_{\text{self-threat}} = 5.14, M_{\text{self-affirmation}} = 4.19$; $F(1, 101) = 7.20, p < .01$).

Next, we created a measure of attitude resistance using the difference in store evaluations before and after the negative message (a greater difference score indicates less resistance). Only a main effect of measure type was evident on the difference score ($F(1, 101) = 4.09, p < .05$). In support of our hypothesis, the explicit attitude exhibited more change ($M = .61$) than the implicit attitude ($M = .07$), indicating more resistance for the latter (for means, see Table 1).

Discussion

Experiment 3 extended our previous results along two important directions. First, the results from this experiment

Table 1

EXPERIMENT 3: THE CHANGE IN IMPLICIT VERSUS EXPLICIT FLATTERY-INDUCED EVALUATIONS FOLLOWING AN ATTACK

Self-Esteem Condition	Implicit Evaluation		Explicit Evaluation	
	Initial Evaluation	Postattack Evaluation	Initial Evaluation	Postattack Evaluation
Self-affirmation	4.19 (.27)	4.20 (.30)	4.41 (.26)	3.81 (.28)
Self-threat	5.14 (.25)	5.00 (.27)	4.32 (.25)	3.70 (.26)

provided another indication of the greater influence exerted by implicit versus explicit attitudes. While our previous studies found evidence that the implicit attitude exerts a greater impact on delayed consequences, this study showed that the implicit attitude is also more resistant to negative information. Second, in a contribution to the flattery literature, we showed that prior self-affirmation inhibits the effect that flattery might otherwise produce. In particular, implicit attitudes induced by flattery were not as favorable for participants who already felt self-affirmed, so we observed no difference between implicit and explicit attitudes for this group. This finding provides support for the premise that the reason that flattery produces favorable implicit reactions in the first place has to do with the need for self-enhancement; thus, if this need is already met before exposure to flattery, the usual positive impact on implicit attitudes is unlikely.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results from four studies offer new perspectives on both dual attitudes and flattery. In particular, we draw on dual attitudes theory to propose that the positive impact of flattery can be difficult to eliminate, even in situations in which a clear ulterior motive exists. Rather, the findings are consistent with the premise that the implicit favorable reaction to flattery, instead of being replaced by the discounted explicit judgment, continues to exist along with it; either judgment is then retrieved and reported, depending on cognitive capacity at the point of measurement. In addition to documenting such dual attitudes, this research makes a contribution to the literature by examining the differential impact of implicit versus explicit attitudes on subsequent consequences. While prior work in the dual attitudes arena has neglected to examine the impact of these attitudes on delayed consequences, the current studies (Experiments 1a and 2) address this issue and show that implicit attitudes can exert a greater influence on delayed behavior than explicit attitudes. Because the prediction of subsequent behavior has always been a key function of the attitudes construct (Fazio 1995; Wicker 1969), this finding highlights the importance of studying implicit attitudes. We also advance current knowledge in the area by providing a more nuanced conceptualization of how implicit versus explicit attitudes can influence explicitly measured behavior. Although the literature thus far supports a simple correspondence account (i.e., explicit behaviors are better predicted by explicit than implicit attitudes; e.g., Petty, Fazio, and Brinol 2008), we provide a theoretical rationale and empirical support for a more complex view—namely, that the correspondence account is valid under immediate measurement but a reversal occurs after a delay. Finally, adding to the perspective that implicit attitudes can be more influential than explicit attitudes, we find that the former is more resistant to subsequent negative information than the latter.

This research also sheds additional light on the effects of flattery in a store agent persuasion context. While agreeing with prior work that suggests that flattery is likely to be discounted when it is accompanied by a palpable ulterior motive, we find that the positive implicit judgment toward the flatterer does not get erased by this discounted (explicit)

judgment; rather, it coexists along with the discounted evaluation and is reported when the appropriate measure is used. We also inform the flattery literature by identifying a theoretically derived boundary condition for the discrepancy between the implicit and explicit attitudes produced by flattery. Specifically, this difference disappears when targets have already fulfilled the self-enhancement goal before being flattered (in such cases, flattery does not boost the implicit attitude). Collectively, therefore, the findings from the current research contribute to the extant literature on flattery by enhancing our understanding of the way this persuasion tactic may exercise its influence.

In addition to their theoretical value, these findings possess practical applicability in the marketing domain because persuasion agents frequently try to ingratiate themselves with prospective consumers by offering them profuse, insincere compliments. Our results suggest that this tactic can exercise a persuasive influence on automatic reactions even when targets correct for the underlying ulterior motive in their explicit judgments. In addition, although flattery may have a negative impact in short run, the implicit reaction may still be more influential in some ways than the corrected judgment—both with regard to delayed effects and in terms of withstanding an attack—thus offering further room for optimism to marketing agents interested in using flattery as a persuasion device (while simultaneously being a cause for concern from the consumer's viewpoint). Finally, the boundary condition identified for the discrepancy between flattery-induced implicit and explicit attitudes offers insights into how the influence of flattery might be diminished or exacerbated. Viewed in this light, these results offer useful implications both for those interested in combating the effects of flattery and for those interested in using it as a persuasion tactic.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the results obtained in this investigation support our underlying conceptualization and offer new insights into flattery, the research also contains some limitations, which should be addressed in further work in this area. Of most importance, further research should try to replicate the current findings in the context of an actual face-to-face interaction to complement the scenario-based studies featured here. Although (as noted previously) the relatively artificial settings used here may actually provide a more stringent environment for detecting the favorable implicit attitude induced by flattery, extending our results to the context of a personal interaction would add to their practical utility.

Other, more substantive opportunities also exist for further investigations. For example, although the current studies demonstrate that the explicit attitude induced by flattery is typically lower than the positive implicit reaction—as would be expected given a discounting process—they did not inquire into the extent of such discounting. For example, does the discounting process cause explicit judgments of flattery to be even more negative than the attitude produced by a nonflattering communication? This issue warrants closer examination. Indeed, another study we carried out in the lab (though not reported here because of space constraints) provides some initial insights. We conducted

the study primarily to generalize the dual attitudes finding to a different operationalization of flattery—specifically, false positive feedback was provided by the store after participants undertook a personality survey (couched as a market research exercise). We then measured implicit and explicit attitudes toward the store; in a replication of our other results, the implicit attitude induced by flattery was more positive than the explicit attitude. Of more relevance to the current issue, this study also assessed dual attitudes in a control (no-flattery) condition. Analyses revealed that though flattery induced a boost in implicit attitudes compared with the no-flattery condition, there was no difference in explicit judgments for flattery versus no flattery.

These indicative findings imply that the discounting in explicit attitudes lowers the initial favorable reaction to the level of a neutral judgment. Notably, however, other research (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007) has found that flattery can actually produce negative judgments relative to a no-flattery control. An intriguing reconciliation of this difference in findings might lie in the extent to which consumers possess a well-developed schema for persuasion tactics used by marketing agents (Friestad and Wright 1994). Such schemas are likely to be richer in North America (where much prior research on salesperson flattery has been conducted) than in Hong Kong (the site of the current investigation). It seems plausible that the more knowledge consumers possess about persuasion tactics (whether arising from individual or cultural factors), the more negative their explicit judgments of flattery will be. Indeed, consumers with rich and well-practiced persuasion knowledge schemas might even make such negative inferences relatively effortlessly (Main, Dahl, and Darke 2007). Therefore, it would be worthwhile for further research to manipulate the depth of the underlying persuasion schema while assessing the negative impact of flattery.

Finally, it would be worthwhile to examine further the relative extent to which implicit versus explicit attitudes can resist negative information. In showing that the implicit attitude displays more resistance than the explicit attitude, the current results (Experiment 3) are consistent with other findings in this area (e.g., Gregg, Seibt, and Banaji 2006; Petty et al. 2006). Recently however, an intriguing study has argued that because implicit versus explicit attitudes represent the output of different learning systems (associative versus propositional), they may be differentially resistant to different types of counterattitudinal information (Rydell and McConnell 2006). In support, these authors find that explicit attitudes were more affected than implicit attitudes by verbally presented counterattitudinal information that needed to be consciously processed (as was the case with the negative information we studied in Experiment 3), whereas implicit attitudes changed in response to counterattitudinal primes that were processed at an associative, nonpropositional level. Applied to our context, these findings indicate that it may be easier to refute flattery by creating lower-order, easily processed associations (e.g., pairing the flatterer with a negative image) instead of taking the route of reasoned counterargument. Research examining this and related possibilities would not only provide further insights into the effects of flattery but also increase theoretical knowledge regarding dual attitudes.

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