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University of Southampton

Faculty of Social Sciences

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When Institutional Logics Collide: The Influence of Subjective Knowledge on Novel Products related Behavioural Intentions While Intra-and-Inter-institutional Logics are in Conflict or Synchronised

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Social Sciences

Southampton Business School

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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Consumers do not make decisions in isolation; their decision-making is related to a broader belief system in society. Particularly in the case of novel products, consumers become more receptive to such social signals due to the lack of understanding of such products in the market owing to their novelty. Despite the extensive research highlighting the potential of institutional logics - the set of material practices and symbolic systems such as beliefs, norms and values that give meaning to consumer decision-making - the role of institutional logics in defining consumers' goals, attitudes and actions remains largely unaddressed in marketing research.

Through the lens of institutional logics, this thesis attempts to explain the complexity of novel product consumption, particularly consumption that is driven by virtual communities and corporations that enable consumers to understand such products. In particular, this thesis seeks answers to the following questions: how consumers form their behavioural intentions towards novel products when they confront positively or negatively synchronised logics around novel products within virtual communities; what happens when consumers encounter conflicting logics regarding such products within virtual communities; what happens when they face these logic dynamics of virtual communities and corporations simultaneously; and how the interaction between virtual communities and corporations affects consumer behavioural intention towards novel products. Additionally, this thesis proposes consumer subjective knowledge as a remedy for novel product adoption. The relationship between subjective knowledge and interplay of institutional logic dynamics (synchronicity and conflict) is explored with choice confidence and justifiability.

Through four online experiments with 803 participants, following the positivism philosophy, this thesis identifies how the activation of virtual community logics and interaction between virtual community and corporation logics moderates the effect of subjective knowledge on their behavioural intentions towards novel products. While participants are influenced by institutional logics, the direction of logics is not connected with the behaviour, which contradicts institutional theorists' arguments suggesting the interdependence of consumers, virtual communities and corporations.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Sukyoung Kang

Title of thesis: When Institutional Logics Collide: The Influence of Subjective Knowledge on Novel Products related Behavioural Intentions While Intra-and-Inter-institutional Logics are in Conflict or Synchronised

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature:

Date: 20th May 2024

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Definitions and Abbreviations

BEIS	The UK Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
CLs	Corporation Logics ‘dominant logics in corporations’
CLs conflict	Corporation Logics in Conflict
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA test
EVs	Electric Vehicles
IL(s)	Institutional Logic(s)
KMO Test	Kaiser—Meyer—Olkin test
NIT.....	Neo Institutional Theory
Novel product(s)	‘a product exhibiting a certain degree of novelty’.
NPD	New Product Development
R&D	Research and Development
RO(s)	Research Objective(s)
RQ(s)	Research Question(s)
VCLs conflict	Virtual Community Logics in Conflict
VCLs.....	Virtual Community Logics ‘dominant logics in virtual communities’
Virtual community	‘A consumer community that is primarily composed of user (consumers)-generated content, functioning as an institutional order within a virtual environment.’

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the foundation for the research by introducing the thesis and explaining its significance. The research interest, motivation and focus are discussed in Section 1.1, and the relevance and rationale of the research are explained in Section 1.2 based on the identification of a gap in the literature related to subjective knowledge, institutional theory, and novel products. The research objectives and research questions are presented in Section 1.3, and a theoretical framework based on the identified research gap is proposed in Section 1.4. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined in Section 1.5.

1.1 Research Interest, Research Motivation and Research Area

To give readers a sense of the main topics and issues that the thesis will cover, this section serves as an introduction to the research and provides an overview of the research interest, motivation and scope.

1.1.1 Importance of Innovation Diffusion and Difficulty of Novel Products Diffusion in the Market

‘The heart and soul of a company is creativity and innovation.’

- Robert Iger, CEO of Walt Disney

Innovation has and will have a significant and far-reaching impact on the lives of citizens now and in the future (OECD, 2017), leading to a surge in interest in innovation not only among businesses and markets but also within governments. For example, the UK government recently allocated its largest-ever research and development (R&D) budget in 2022, amounting to £39.8 billion, for the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy’s partner organisations (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2022). As stated in the current Parliament of 2023, the UK government planned to increase this budget on innovation by 33% from 2024 to 2025, signalling a continued emphasis on innovation as a critical driver of prosperity and competitiveness (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2022). In contrast, to strengthen the country’s R&D enterprise and promote innovation, the US government announced an investment of \$210 billion, the historically significant budget for federal R&D (The White House, 2023). In a similar vein, South Korea, an Organisation for Economic Co-operation, and Development (OECD) member, is fuelled by the government’s investment in emerging technologies and an innovative private sector standing out with the

second highest R&D intensity among OECD countries, primarily driven by substantial investments by businesses in R&D (OECD, 2023).

These investments in innovation made by various countries demonstrate the governments' commitment to fostering innovation-based technological advancement and economic growth. Importantly, corporations play a central role in governments' efforts to democratise innovation for their people. This is because the commercial success of businesses leads to a chain effect of national economic expansion and individual well-being. This effect encompasses GDP growth (Ahlstrom, 2010), creation of new employment opportunities (Cohen and Winn, 2007), market revitalisation (Chen, 2022) and individuals' enhanced experience through firms' offerings (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2020). In line with this, innovation in the current business environment is increasingly being acknowledged as a critical means of achieving and sustaining competitive advantage (McKinsey and Company, 2023). The marketing academia has consistently demonstrated that the concept of innovation is a catalyst for value creation and competitive advantage (Skålén et al., 2015; Bleicher and Stanley, 2017; Kopalle et al., 2020; Buccieri et al., 2023). In particular, product innovation, or innovation through products, when combined with advanced technology, facilitates firms' revenue through its ability to enhance product quality and cost-effectiveness (Baregheh et al., 2009). For example, Tesla, a company focused on electric vehicles (EVs) producing and sustainable energy solutions, introduced EVs to the market (Tesla, n.d.). By providing EVs that capitalise on electric motors and rechargeable batteries, the company's earnings increased significantly, reaching approximately 81.5 billion US dollars in the fiscal year 2022 (Statista, 2023). This novel technological innovation adoption sparked notable effects in the automobile market, shifting market demand and supply and accelerating the transition to EVs (Wadhwa, 2020).

However, despite the advantages of innovative products for consumers, firms and even society, the diffusion of innovative products poses formidable challenges for companies owing to their inherent degree of novelty in consumer perception and the broader market landscape (Caprioli et al., 2023). Novel products, characterised by a certain degree of novelty, denote new or significantly improved offerings from companies typically leveraging advanced or innovative technology (Saridakis et al., 2019). Tidd and Bessant (2018) highlight that the degree of novelty is a fundamental aspect of innovative products, which stimulates individuals to adopt such products while also generating varying degrees of hesitancy or resistance. The intricate interplay between acceptance and reluctance emerges during the decision-making process when consumers grapple with evaluating the perceived benefits, utilisation methods, compatibility with existing routines or processes and potential consequences associated with adopting these novel products, leading to resistance or hesitation in the diffusion of novel products in the market (Mani and Chouk, 2017).

1.1.2 The Role of Virtual Communities on the Diffusion of Novel Products

Consumers frequently engage in information-seeking behaviour when faced with uncertainty about novel products to make more confident decisions (Finkelstein and Fishbach, 2012; Bone et al., 2014). Because of their convenience and accessibility, virtual environments play the predominant role of channels via which consumers obtain such information (Dekimpe et al., 2020). Virtual communities, in particular, not only contribute significantly to the accumulation of knowledge regarding novel products but also garner consumers' attention to these offerings (Fisher, 2019). For instance, among various types of virtual communities, platforms such as Facebook fan pages serve as conduits for social networking with companies and their offerings (e.g., Tesla fan page, <https://www.facebook.com/TeslaMotorsCorp/>). Individuals express their affinity by liking or commenting on brand-generated content (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002). Similarly, Reddit (<https://www.reddit.com/>) or Quora (<https://www.quora.com/>) are communities revolving around specific threads focused on the subjects introduced in those threads. Participants in these discussions frequently share real-life encounters with brands, product insights or product market evaluations (Füller and Matzler, 2007).

In light of the individuals' behaviours exhibited within the virtual environment as depicted above, where consumers serve as catalysts in the diffusion of novel products in the market, whether through deliberate information seeking and active engagement with products or through incidental exposure to such products during various online activities, this research endeavour is undertaken with the aim of contributing to the understanding and advancement of novel product diffusion. In particular, among the diverse array of virtual communities, the focus of this thesis is on virtual communities predominantly based on consumer-generated content stemming from interactions among individuals. Within the context of this thesis, these micro-level consumer-operated communities will be referred to as 'virtual communities.'

The following real-world instances concerning novel products provide a deeper understanding, enriching comprehension of the influence wielded by consumers through their intentional or unintentional interactions or activities within virtual communities on the diffusion of novel products. NuFACE, a product engineered to enhance anti-aging skincare, utilises innovative microcurrent techniques, particularly within the facial device product category (NuFACE., n.d.). Figure 1 illustrates the process of individuals' consumption decision-making within a Reddit thread discussing NuFACE, where individuals interact with others in discourse about the product.

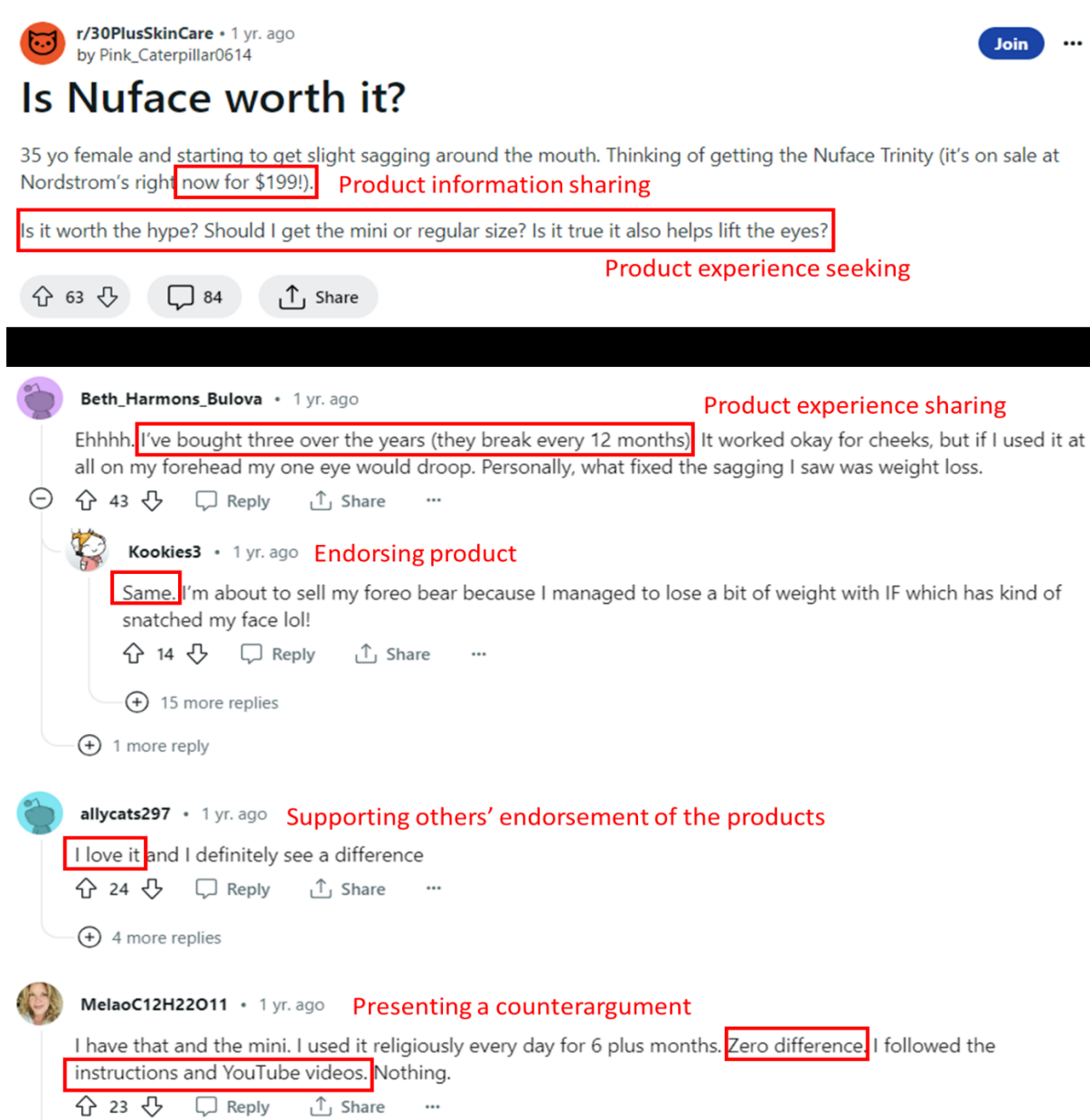


Figure 1 Consumers' Online Interactions regarding NuFace in a Forum Thread of Reddit

As illustrated in Figure 1, individuals acquire product-related knowledge and cultivate heightened interest while interacting with one other in the virtual community. Some individuals seek product information, whereas those with prior knowledge or experience with the product share their insights and experiences (Figure 1). During this process, they express their sentiments towards the product, revealing either endorsing or opposing attitudes. As a result, individuals who actively participate in such interactions, as well as those who observe these interactions, tend to develop an interest in the product, naturally accumulate product knowledge and form attitudes through these interactions. Furthermore, the heightened interest subsequently culminates in the eventual adoption of these products, as evidenced by a screenshot of an online thread on a YouTube channel that introduces NuFACE (Figure 2).

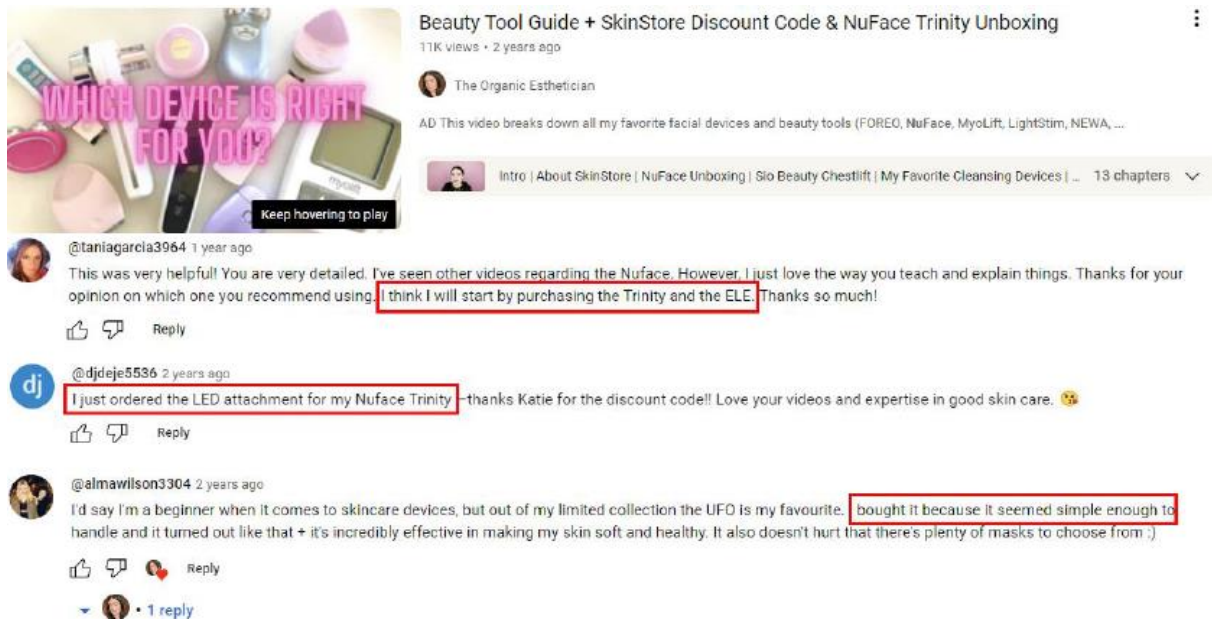


Figure 2 Example of Consumers' Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products through YouTube

Interestingly, while the potential for the diffusion of novel products through consumer interactions within virtual communities has been demonstrated in the preceding examples, it is noteworthy that a heterogeneous spectrum of viewpoints on such novel products prevails. This phenomenon can be ascribed to the lack of a prevailing or established market consensus regarding these novel offerings (Mani and Chouk, 2017). Figure 2 depicts a unidirectional flow of overall perceptions and attitudes towards novel products—manifesting in a dominantly positive or consistently negative direction. Alternatively, these viewpoints may remain divergent, displaying conflicting trajectories, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Based on the abovementioned observation, this thesis was driven by a curiosity for how various dynamics regarding novel products within virtual communities will influence consumer decision-making.

1.1.3 The Role of Corporations on the Diffusion of Novel Products

Beyond the virtual communities such as Facebook fan pages, Reddit and Quora, consumers also seek information through brand websites or company-run online communities before making purchase decision. These channels differ from the consumer-generated content predominant in virtual communities, offering brand-generated content with liability (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001), although avenues for consumer expression exist, variation often depends on the company's channel design intent. Since corporations wield authority in supplying products and shaping market dynamics, consumers consider corporations' viewpoints when making decisions in virtual environments (Henard and Szymanski, 2001). Consumers strive to

grasp product information, market dynamics and forecasts provided through company-owned channels, thereby aiding their decision-making process (Moorlock et al., 2023).

For example, Tesla hosts the Investor Day event, affording an opportunity to showcase cutting-edge production lines and engage in discussions with both institutional and retail investors about long-term expansion strategies and other pertinent topics (Tesla, 2023). As shown in Figure 3, it is evident that consumers consider brand announcements when making decisions.

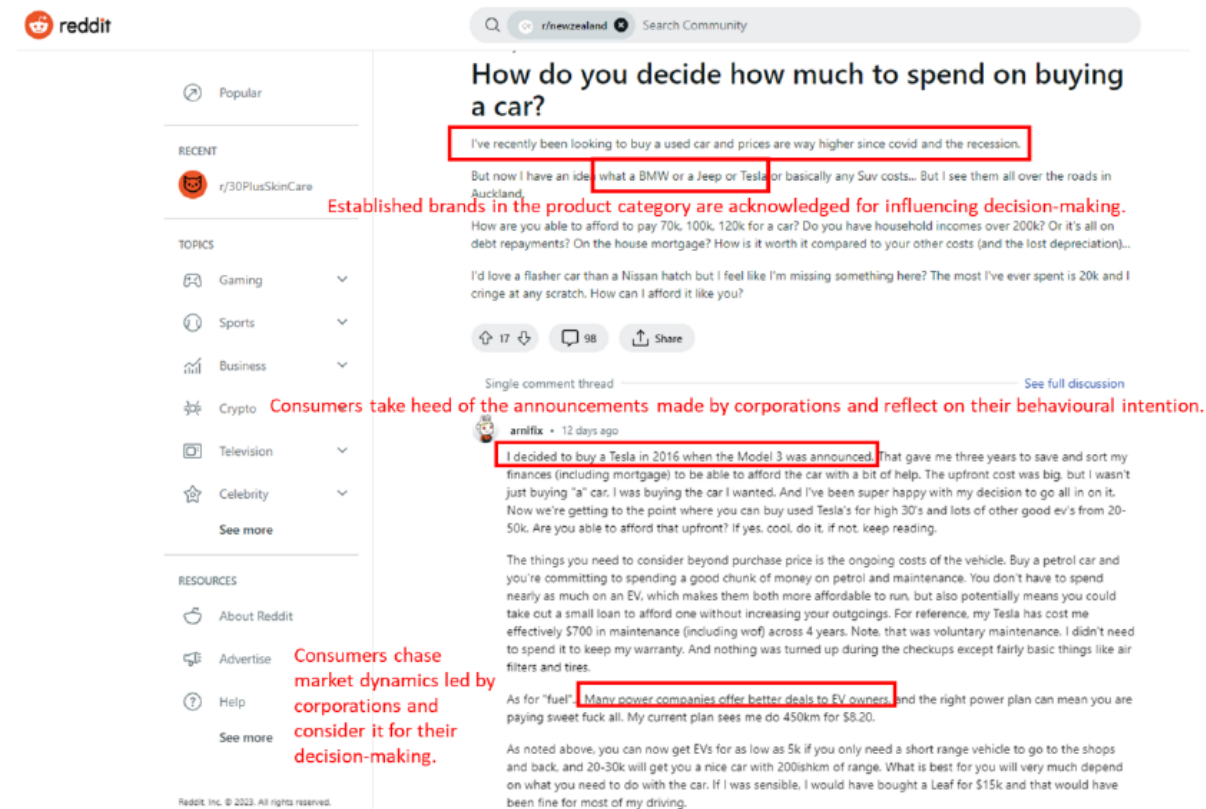


Figure 3 Evidence of Consumers’ Reflection of Corporation Activities on their Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products

Based on the observation above, this thesis is intrigued by the potential outcomes stemming from how corporations, viewed through a meso-level lens¹, will affect consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

More interestingly, corporations exhibit diverse dynamics resembling virtual communities (Figure 4). Considering the case of EVs, it appears likely that automakers will overwhelmingly present consumers with a positive stance on EVs, but the real landscape proves multifaceted. Indeed, several leading automotive companies are displaying resistance towards EVs for

¹ Corporations operate within a broader social context and exert influence through a slightly broader scope of social dynamics compared to virtual communities, which operate at the micro-level.

various reasons. For example, Volkswagen resists EVs, asserting that they are reflecting consumers' reluctance to adopt EVs to their production strategy (The Driven, 2023). Similarly, Ferrari demonstrates opposition to EVs by reaffirming its commitment to the ongoing development of internal combustion engines while also preserving their heritage (BBC News, 2022). In contrast, Toyota has demonstrated a favourable stance towards EVs by unveiling a comprehensive line-up of full EVs, similar to Tesla (Toyota UK, 2021).

**“Customer resistance:”
Volkswagen cuts EV production
as it fails to keep up with market**

JULY 6, 2023 · 29 COMMENTS · 2 MINUTE READ · DANIEL BLEAKLEY



**Toyota unveils full global electric vehicle
line-up**

By Joe Clifford · 14 December 2021 · 83 Comments



Figure 4 Different Dynamics towards EVs from Different Corporations

1.1.4 Exploring the Interaction of Virtual Communities and Corporations: Analysing their Influence on Consumers' Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products through a Lens of Institutional Logics

In the previous sections, it has been noted that consumers perceive the information disseminated by corporations, while also acknowledging the varied stances exhibited by virtual communities regarding novel products. Acknowledging the impact of virtual communities and corporations on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products, the primary aim of this thesis is to comprehensively examine the interactions between the two entities (virtual communities and corporations) at different levels (micro and meso) on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. This thesis will investigate how the diverse dynamics exhibited by corporations, in conjunction with the dynamics emerging from virtual communities, influence consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

To address this, the thesis adopts the institutional logic lens, a concept derived from institutional theory that underlies social norms and beliefs (Friedland and Alford, 1991).

Institutional logics are socially constructed norms and beliefs that individuals and organisations use to produce and reproduce meaning through their actions (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). This thesis comprehends how individuals interpret the logics of virtual communities and corporations and the viewpoints that they have developed regarding novel products. Virtual community logics and corporation logics can manifest as positively synchronised, negatively synchronised, or conflicting logics towards novel products, depending on how these logics indicate the direction towards novel products (Details will be discussed in Section 2.6).

Given that institutional logics provide meaning to individuals' actions and can be produced and reproduced over time (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999), this thesis contends that incorporating institutional logics into marketing research is a promising approach to understanding consumer behavioural intention, particularly in the context of novel product consumption. Indeed, the degree of novelty is inherently subjective and contextual (Chen et al., 2014). This implies that individuals' acceptance of novel products may evolve or remain unchanged over time, based on how the norms and beliefs towards novel products, namely, institutional logics, are shaped and how individuals perceive these logics. Furthermore, at the beginning of this thesis, the ability of consumers to influence institutional logics related to novel products through their interactions within virtual communities and the resulting impact on consumer behavioural intentions, was first demonstrated through real-life examples (Figures 1-3). Therefore, this thesis asserts that interpreting these phenomena through the lens of institutional logics holds significance for marketers because it suggests an opportunity to influence individual perceptions of novel products, thereby facilitating the diffusion of these products.

1.1.5 Intrinsic Factor Facilitating the Diffusion of Novel Products: Consumers' Subjective Knowledge

Meanwhile, this thesis considers consumers' subjective knowledge as a significant determinant of behavioural intention formation towards novel products. It is important to recognise that extrinsic factors do not solely influence individual decisions (Rao and Monroe, 1988). Various personal traits, as well as how individuals perceive benefits, usability, cost, and social norms regarding the product, can all have a significant impact on individuals' behavioural intention to adopt novel products (Davis, 1987). These factors collectively contribute to shaping consumers' subjective knowledge, which is a self-assessed understanding or perception of products. In marketing research, subjective knowledge has been identified as a key determinant influencing the adoption of innovative products (Wood and Lynch, 2002; Moorman et al., 2004; Thøgersen et al., 2010). This thesis aims to achieve a deeper understanding of individuals' behavioural responses to the adoption of novel products by considering this intrinsic factor in conjunction with external factors, specifically the institutional logics stemming from virtual communities

and the intricate interplay between the institutional logics of these communities and the corporate logics. This thesis also explores relevant psychological mechanisms that can elucidate these relationships and provide a deeper understanding of consumer behavioural intention to afford more sophisticated insights for marketers.

In summary, given the significance and difficulty of the diffusion of novel products, and the potential for variability in individual and environmental factors influencing a adoption and diffusion of novel products, this research seeks to address the following fundamental questions: how do individuals' subjective knowledge and the social norms or beliefs about novel products, particularly those emerging from virtual communities and corporations in the form of institutional logics, shape their behavioural intentions towards novel products. Will the specific direction of institutional logics impede or accelerate the consumption of novel products? To address these questions, this thesis focuses on two pivotal concepts that influence the consumption of novel products: consumer subjective knowledge and institutional logics emerging from virtual communities and corporations.

The following section aims to provide a detailed rationale for the necessity of conducting this research. Section 1.2 emphasises the gaps in the current knowledge base while also exploring factors at various levels impacting such individuals within virtual communities (micro-level) and corporations (meso-level) that may eventually influence the consumption of novel products. The scope of the research involves exploring the close relationship between institutional logics, particularly those found in virtual communities and corporations, and subjective knowledge in consumer behavioural intention towards novel products.

1.2 Research Relevance and Research Rationale

The subsequent section delves into the interconnectedness of key variables that will be investigated in this thesis. These variables encompass institutional logic concepts stemming from virtual communities and corporations, as well as consumers' subjective knowledge and potential psychological mechanisms that can help explain the relationship between these factors. Section 1.2.1 begins by introducing the concept of institutions, which aids in comprehending the notion of institutional logics.

1.2.1 Institutions and Institutional Logic(s)

The concept of institution emerged as a theoretical framework to comprehend the resilient social structures that shape organisational dynamics in the field of management and organisational studies (Scott, 2001). Institutions, whether public or private and for-profit or not-

for-profit, have a distinct rationality that distinguishes them from other entities, exhibiting unique objectives based on the implicit assumptions shared among their members (Khalil, 1995). Thus, institutions are often perceived as ‘integrated systems of rules that structure social interactions’ (Hodgson, 2015, p. 501). For example, marriage is a prime example of institution. Marriage is shaped by the establishment, elaboration, and prescription of expected behaviours for individuals occupying roles such as husband or wife, which aids individuals in upholding long-term contracts and fostering family values (Waite, 1995). Similarly, legal systems serve as institutions by requiring individuals to adhere to specific laws and norms within their group or community (Hodgson, 2006). In essence, these institutions are integrated systems of rules that have been meticulously designed to organise and govern social interactions.

Although organisations and institutions can be considered synonymous, organisations represent a narrower form of institutions or function as clusters of institutions (Knight, 1992); organisations have internal institutions that govern interactions between individuals within the organisations (Hodgson, 2006). In essence, institutions encompass a broader scope, whereas organisations are specific entities with internal governing structures. For instance, the university can be viewed as both an organisation and an institution of higher education in the sense that universities are social structures with established norms, values and practices that govern their operations (Prisching, 1993). They have a unique rationality and pursue specific goals such as providing education, conducting research, and disseminating knowledge. Universities have distinct norms, values, governance structures and objectives that distinguish them from other educational institutions or organisations (Prisching, 1993). These elements contribute to the university’s legitimacy as an institution, facilitating its operation in a broader social and cultural context. These elements encompass the rationality, goals and assumptions that are deeply ingrained in the functioning of an institution and are collectively referred to as *institutional logic(s)* (Friedland and Alford, 1991).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) define institutional logic(s)² (henceforth, ILs) as a set of *taken-for-granted rules* that guide individual and organisational cognition and behaviour within institutions. ILs play an important role in institutional resilience by providing them with the legitimacy to exist and operate (Lowndes and McCaughie, 2013). Returning to the example of universities, the ability of universities to withstand and adapt to changes and challenges over

² Throughout the scope of this thesis, the abbreviation ‘IL’ is consistently utilised in its singular form to encompass and encapsulate the overarching concept of institutional logic. Conversely, the plural form ‘ILs’ is employed to specifically address scenarios wherein multiple distinct institutional logics coexist within a defined context. This pertains particularly to instances involving both conflicting and synchronised institutional logics within the domain of consumption.

time is paramount for their survival. This ability is facilitated by ILs that are deeply ingrained in universities and widely inherently recognised among individuals and society (Leslie, 1973). Consequently, universities can sustain despite external pressures such as the emergence of artificial intelligence, proliferation of online education, declining student enrolment and other disruptive forces (McKinsey and Company, 2022). Universities are resilient and adaptive institutions because they are constantly evolving internally and responding to these dynamics. Based on the rationale presented previously, scholars in management and organisational studies have recognised the significant role of ILs in legitimising the existence of organisations and shaping their practices and decisions (Haveman and Rao, 1997; Reay and Hinings, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2010; Pache and Santos, 2013). How organisations interact with and adapt to their institutional environments, influencing their strategies, practices and overall functioning was specifically investigated (Weick and Quinn, 1999; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Michel, 2014; Hinings et al., 2018).

However, the substantial explanatory capacity of ILs in elucidating consumer behavioural intention has not been extensively studied, and researchers have called for further such examinations (Slimane et al., 2019). Indeed, Thornton and Ocasio (1999) emphasised that individuals are the ultimate entity that produces ILs, and they introduce reproduced logic into their identity, interest and behaviour, defining ILs as ‘the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality’ (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). In other words, individuals contribute to the generation of ILs, which subsequently become embedded in society and influence individuals’ cognition and behaviour. As a result, these ILs provide legitimacy for individuals’ actions and choices.

Acknowledging the influential role of ILs in legitimising individual behaviour and shaping their perceptions of symbols and materials encountered in everyday life, as well as the creation and dissemination of ILs into society, this research is firmly grounded in the belief that adopting the lens of IL provides a valuable framework for exploring the intricate dynamics of how consumers interact with and make decisions about the perception of novel products.

1.2.2 Power of Individuals in Institutional Changes

Establishing a specific practice or idea as an IL necessitates collaborative efforts by various social actors, including individuals and/or organisations. These actors, known as institutional entrepreneurs, play a crucial role in advocating for the acceptance and convergence of ILs over time (Aldrich, 2012). Institutional entrepreneurs are proactive agents who challenge existing

norms and seek to introduce new ILs or modify existing ones (Battilana, 2006). They leverage their influence, resources, and networks to drive institutional change and shape the prevailing institutional landscape (Battilana, 2006). Institutional entrepreneurs contribute to the evolution and transformation of institutions by championing innovative ideas and practices, ultimately influencing the behaviours and actions of individuals and organisations within those institutions' arrangements (Ashraf et al., 2017; Dahlmann and Grosvold, 2017; Berggren and Karabag, 2019). Recognising the power of institutional entrepreneurs and acknowledging the active role of individuals in the inter-institutional social system, which often comprises representative groups such as state, religion, family, profession, market, corporation, and community, collectively known as the institutional order (Thornton et al., 2012), this thesis highlights the capacity of individuals to initiate and drive changes in ILs. This recognition highlights the potential for individuals to catalyse significant shifts in societal practices and foster institutional change.

However, despite individuals' ability to alter the dynamics of institutional orders such as markets or corporations (Park and Luo, 2001), the significant impact of individuals' partial autonomy as actors at the societal level, as proposed in institutional theory, remains relatively underexplored in marketing research (Storbacka et al., 2016; Slimane et al., 2019; Vargo et al., 2020). This thesis contends that understanding the interplay between individuals, specifically consumers, and the institutional context will help in identifying consumers' behavioural intention or responses to changes in the institutional landscape, providing insights for businesses for more efficient management (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006). Indeed, according to institutional theory, consumption cannot be viewed as completely independent of the institutional context because consumers and firms have the potential to influence markets and consumption, and they operate as actors within the inter-institutional system (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013). In line with this, few attempts in marketing research have been made to understand the impact of consumer behavioural intention on institutional processes using institutional theory (e.g., Humphreys, 2010; Ansari and Phillips, 2011; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Yanget al., 2012; Dolbec and Fischer, 2015; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Several researchers have examined how consumers can play a significant role in shaping markets by acting as institutional entrepreneurs, introducing new ILs that challenge existing norms and promote greater choice (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Dolbec and Fischer, 2015; Kjeldgaard et al., 2017). For example, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) illustrate how Fatshionistas, individuals who embrace plus-sized fashion, mobilised to challenge the fashion industry's dominant thinness norm, and promote alternative market logics. Furthermore, studies have explored the co-construction of markets through the participation of various stakeholders such as businesses, consumers, government, and the media (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Humphreys, 2010).

These studies, such as those focusing on the Yoga and gambling industries, highlight the complex process of market evolution and development facilitated by the collaborative efforts of multiple actors. However, these studies that emphasise individuals' power tend to focus on individuals who possess the resources and capabilities to effect institutional change. For example, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) have investigated the impact of influential bloggers on the fashion industry. Individual bloggers hold significant influence over consumer perceptions, leading brands, and the industry to pay attention to their voices and make appropriate institutional changes.

In contrast to the prevalent academic conventions in prior institutional theory literature, business and management research including marketing studies recognise a more comprehensive understanding of consumer power that includes the collective power of consumers regardless of their possession of resources or capabilities (Wang et al., 2013; Akbari et al., 2022). This is demonstrated by academic efforts to comprehend the phenomena such as co-creation, in which consumers' collective voice and action play a role in the creation and advancement of products and services (Kennedy and Guzmán, 2016; Chen et al., 2018; Itani, 2020). For example, consumer complaints and feedback have been recognised as a collective manifestation of power capable of either tarnishing or revitalising brands (Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Hassan et al., 2016; Chan et al., 2017; Mazhar et al., 2022).

These business practices captured in reality propelled institutional studies by shifting their focus away from the heroic institutional entrepreneur, which overemphasises individual agency, towards a recognition of embedded actors who cannot instigate institutional change on their own (Battilana, 2006; Khan et al., 2007; Leca et al., 2008; Albertini and Muzzi, 2016; Olsen, 2017; Hoogstraaten et al., 2020). Recognising the capacity of individuals to drive substantial changes in societal norms and practices and facilitate institutional change, this thesis seeks to address the limited exploration of partial autonomy of individuals through the lens of ILs in marketing research, particularly those lacking significant capabilities, in effecting social changes independently, particularly within the context of virtual community.

1.2.3 ILs of Two Institutional Orders: Corporations and Communities in Virtual Environment

Numerous ILs sustain the world functioning as a unique set of characteristics, but organisational theorists have proposed a concept of *institutional orders* that refers to the near-decomposability of elements within the inter-institutional system, where each institutional order maintains its distinct sense of rationality that distinguishes it from others (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Scholars have proposed various classifications of institutional orders to

understand the inter-institutional system (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). Among them, the work of Thornton et al. (2012) is widely acknowledged as a significant contribution to the field. In particular, their establishment of classifications clearly captures the contemporary dynamics of community existence. The seven distinct institutional orders within the inter-institutional system identified by Thornton et al. (2012) are as follows: state, religion, family, profession, market, corporation, and community.

These seven institutional orders are intricately linked to changes in consumer behavioural intention and market dynamics. This is because these institutional orders intersect, resulting in institutional overlap of the convergence of tasks, memberships, and policies of two or more institutions (Reinsberg and Westerwinter, 2023). Consequently, independently established institutions within each institutional order do not operate in isolation; rather, there is interplay among these institutional orders, with each order exerting influence on the others although each institutional order has its own central logic (Faude and Fuß, 2020). Although seven institutional orders are interlinked, special emphasis will be placed in the context of this thesis on examining ILs of two distinct institutional orders: *corporations* and *communities*. This focus is warranted by their pronounced relevance and consequential impact on shaping consumer behavioural intention, as well as market dynamics, particularly within the realm of novel product consumption. Reiterating the significance of corporations and communities in novel product consumption, as discussed in Section 1, and drawing connections with these two institutional orders, the rationale for focusing on them is elaborated upon in detail below.

Corporations, functioning as an institutional order, adhere to a set of norms, values, and rationality that dictate their product development, marketing strategies, and interactions with consumers. This process contributes to the formation of *corporation logics*. In essence, through the corporation logics shaped within the inter-institutional system, corporations obtain legitimacy for their products, services, and associated business activities within the market and among their consumers (Thornton et al., 2012). This process involves firms actively advocating for their value proposition (Porter, 1985), effectively leveraging their communication channels to influence and present the value of products to consumers (Glaister et al., 2014). In other words, corporations strive to offer consumers a thorough comprehension of the trajectory of their offerings, market potential, and the intended direction for development and promotion through their company websites, thereby contributing to consumers' comprehension of corporation logics (Vernuccio and Ceccotti, 2015). As a result, this engagement enables consumers to align their expectations, preferences, and behaviour with the perceived strategic direction of the firm, thereby fostering their demand for products and influencing their consumption patterns accordingly (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). In particular, when it comes to novel products that are relevantly new in the markets, consumers often exhibit a propensity to comprehend market

trends and anticipate the future strategies of leading firms by engaging with company websites, such as Facebook fan pages (Hammick and Ju, 2018). Essentially, when consumers encounter communication channels offering information and insights about novel products, their features, and market positioning provided by companies, they naturally assimilate the associative network of schemas for novel products provided by corporations (Glaser et al., 2016), thus internalising corporation logics to their cognition and behaviour (Thornton et al., 2012). Moreover, throughout this process, consumers frequently articulate curiosity or demand for novel products to companies or among themselves. This expression can trigger shifts in market dynamics, consequently propelling a greater activation of novel products (Slater and Narver, 1998; Sethi et al., 2001).

Through the depiction of corporations as an institutional order, this thesis underscores that corporations not only wield the power to influence consumer behavioural intentions towards novel products but also play a pivotal role in facilitating the introduction, acceptance, and diffusion of novel products in the market. Consequently, corporations influence consumers' behavioural intention through unique ILs and practices (Anker et al., 2015). Therefore, this thesis focuses on corporations as one of the seven institutional orders to elucidate their impact on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Next, the institutional order of community emerged as a distinctive feature of the developmental process of institutional theory, highlighting a sense of place-based identity and its significant impact on individuals' collective decision-making aligned with community values and objectives within a specific geographical area (Marquis et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2012; Geissinger et al., 2018; Mutch, 2021).

One key argument for the importance of community as an institutional order is that physical proximity within a given region can facilitate economic development by prioritising goals such as preserving local traditions, building social capital through networks and partnerships, and economic well-being of the community (Warren, 1967; Marquis et al., 2007). However, the meaning of a region-based community is fading in the digital age as it faces challenges related to globalisation, urbanisation, and demographic change, particularly in the context of consumption, which plays a significant role in promoting economic development by stimulating demand, promoting innovation, and incentivising sustainability (Dubois and Sielker, 2022).

On the contrary, economic development through consumption in the digital age is characterised by a highly dynamic and fluid landscape in which communities in the virtual environment, known as virtual communities, play an increasingly important role in shaping consumer behavioural intention and driving innovation and growth (Greenwood et al., 2010; Marquis and Battilana, 2009). Howard Rheingold (1993, p. 5) first defined the concept of virtual community

as 'social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on... public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace'. As evidenced by real-life examples in Figures 1-3 in Section 1.1.2 and Section 1.1.3, individuals actively share their consumption experiences online.

Given the nascent nature and limited presence of novel products in the market, there is a lack of established ILs regarding novel products that guide consumer behavioural intention (Purtik and Arenas, 2019), posing a challenge to consumers in their decision-making. Therefore, individuals often turn to virtual communities to understand the norms or practices regarding novel products through user interactions. Drawing on established research regarding the influence of communities on consumer behavioural intention within the marketing domain (Butler and Peppard, 1998; Hajli and Sims, 2015; Izogo and Jayawardhena, 2018; Secinaro et al., 2022), Kozinet (1999) introduced groundbreaking insights into the role of virtual communities in consumption. He delineated virtual communities of consumption as distinctive subgroups centred on consumption-related interests, characterised by "affiliative groups whose online interactions are built on a collective enthusiasm and expertise in a particular consumption activity or a related set of activities" (Kozinet, 1999, p. 254). This characterisation underscores the impact of virtual communities, particularly the interactions among individuals within these communities, on their collective purchasing power, potentially altering market dynamics.

In the context of consuming novel products, when firms and individuals engage in reciprocal interactions within virtual communities, individuals not only reinforce their product preferences but also acquire insights into product value, especially with innovative and novel offerings, given their limited prior experience with such products (Dahan and Hauser, 2002; Füller et al., 2016; Porter and Donthu, 2008). Consequently, virtual communities function as an institutional order with their own ILs surrounding the novel products, which are distinct from other institutional orders yet still exert influence on consumer behavioural intention. Unlike other institutional orders, virtual communities rely more on interactions and discussions among individuals when shaping their own ILs. These ILs are developed through collective enthusiasm and expertise within the community, reflecting the unique dynamics and norms established through ongoing interactions among its members (Thornton et al., 2012).

In line with the distinctive attributes of novel products, this thesis underscores the significance of virtual communities and their capacity to shape consumer behavioural intention, emphasising their close ties with corporations. Consequently, the thesis concentrates on the role of virtual communities as an institutional order and aims to explore its influence on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Although recognising virtual communities as an institutional order is unconventional, the focal point of this investigation includes this proposition. This proposal finds support in the significant influence virtual communities wield over individuals' cognition and behaviours, highlighting the extensive impact of digitalisation on consumer behavioural intention, as well as the pervasive integration of digitalised communication by corporations. These aspects will be extensively discussed in Chapter 2.

To summarise, this section explores the significant influence of two institutional orders - virtual communities and corporations - on consumer behavioural intention, implying that these play a crucial role in facilitating and moulding consumer behavioural intentions towards novel products. This connection is established by considering the unique characteristics of novel products as well as consumer behaviour when engaging in novel product consumption. Consequently, this thesis argues that both virtual communities and corporations have the potential to guide consumers' cognition and behaviour in novel product consumption as institutional orders; thus, they should be explored concurrently, and their interaction effect should be highlighted in the academic discourse on marketing.

1.2.4 Subjective Knowledge, Novel Product Consumption and Relationship with ILs

Consumer knowledge has been extensively studied and proven to play a significant role in shaping consumer behavioural intention in various consumption contexts. For example, Laroche et al. (2001) and Schlegelmilch et al. (1996) have underscored the impact of consumer knowledge on sustainable products and related environmental issues, highlighting its role in driving participation in sustainable consumption behaviour. Yen et al. (2008) found that consumers' knowledge of diet showed varying degrees of consumption difference for different types of meat (e.g., beef, pork, poultry, and fish) at home and away from home. Lin and Chen (2006) revealed that consumers' product knowledge influences their choice of insurance and catering services.

As evidenced in previous research delineated above, acknowledging the power of consumer knowledge on behaviour prompted extensive research to understand various types of consumer knowledge, primarily categorized into two main dimensions: *objective knowledge*, representing an individual's factual knowledge about a product and *subjective knowledge*, reflecting an individual's abstract understanding and degree of knowledge about a product (Brucks, 1985; Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; Bearden et al., 2001; Carlson et al., 2009). In the context of innovative products, objective knowledge has received considerable attention as a prominent factor influencing their adoption, owing to the perception that these products are technologically advanced and necessitate technical competence on the part of users (Gibbert

et al., 2002; Su et al., 2006; Van Gils et al., 2009; Jaziri, 2019; Castagna et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2022). However, given the inherent lack of understanding regarding novel products in the market, a narrow focus on objective knowledge may restrict the investigation to professionals or early adopters who already have prior knowledge and interest in such products (Reinhardt and Gurtner, 2015), constraining the study scope and generalisability of research findings.

Furthermore, objective knowledge is viewed as a constant construct rooted in actual information or experiential encounters with the product, both before and after use (Carlson et al., 2009). In turn, such knowledge is grounded in hard facts derived from their actual experience with products. As a result, when individuals construct their product knowledge using objective knowledge and form either positive or negative attitudes towards products, it implies that reversing existing perceptions can be challenging. In other words, it signifies that marketers may find it difficult to alter consumers' perceptions of products once they have been established through objective knowledge. Conversely, this thesis suggests that subjective knowledge, based on an individual's comprehension and self-interpretation of their level of product knowledge, presents a greater opportunity for marketers to influence general consumer behavioural intention as they are still malleable. In other words, this thesis posits that unlike objective knowledge, which is rooted in verifiable facts and may exhibit more resistance to change, subjective knowledge offers greater flexibility and adaptability in consumer attitudes and behaviours.

Furthermore, particularly in the case of novel products that have not yet achieved widespread usage among consumers and where social norms and beliefs regarding their concept, ownership, and usage are still evolving, this thesis proposes that the role of subjective knowledge will hold greater prominence. This is because if a certain subjective knowledge of novel products becomes dominant among individuals through interpersonal communication and information exchange, the perception formed of such products based on subjective knowledge can be spread although such knowledge may be formed on inaccurate facts or false information about the product (Williams Kirkpatrick, 2021), thereby affecting the collective adoption of novel products. This often leads to perceiving the products with distorted and amplified actual attributes in either a positive or negative direction, as well as spawns extended evaluation and acceptance.

The increasing popularity of organic food products exemplifies the power of subjective knowledge. Organic food products are accompanied by an implicit belief in their favourable impact on health (Paul and Rana, 2012). However, it should be noted that the term organic refers to a specific cultivation method, and the actual health benefits of organic produce are distinct from this agricultural practice (European Commission, n.d.). In fact, scientific evidence

indicates that there are no substantial disparities in nutritional composition between organic and non-organic crops of the same variety (Dangour et al., 2010). Nevertheless, subjective knowledge of organic food products has significantly contributed to the widespread adoption of organic food among consumers, fuelled by cultural belief in the importance of natural and sustainable practices, social norms promoting healthy lifestyles, and personal values related to environmental conservation (Roseira, 2022). Despite potentially higher prices and limited availability, consumers' subjective knowledge of organic food's perceived health benefits and ethical considerations has accelerated its diffusion and market growth. Based on the aforementioned rationale, this thesis begins with the premise that delving into subjective knowledge can provide valuable insights into consumer behavioural intention, especially in the context of novel products where established views or norms may be lacking, thus creating an opportunity to shape consumer cognition regarding such products.

Furthermore, this thesis suggests a close relationship between subjective knowledge and the concept of ILs. Notably, ILs are a set of values, beliefs and normative expectations that people, groups and organisations use to understand and evaluate their daily actions (Thornton et al., 2012). Subjective knowledge is formed through an individual's personal interpretation of information, which is influenced by their beliefs, values, experiences, and social environment (Hadar et al., 2013). Indeed, personal values or cultural beliefs can influence an individual's subjective comprehension and perception or concept of a product, thereby influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviours towards the products (Wyer and Kardes, 2020; Singh et al., 2023). Building on the link between ILs and subjective knowledge, this thesis proposes that because subjective knowledge is more malleable than objective knowledge, there exists an opportunity for ILs to intervene and mould subjective knowledge in specific directions. Marketers have the potential to wield significant influence over individual perceptions in this context by leveraging subjective knowledge and actively participating in the process of institutional change by conveying their ILs through various communication channels, such as advertising and sales promotion (Goode et al., 2010).

To summarise, this section elucidates that the investigation will focus on a comprehensive examination of subjective knowledge, highlighting its importance in influencing consumer behavioural intention concerning novel products, especially given the close interconnection with the concept of ILs.

1.2.5 ILs Conflict and Synchronicity and Consumers' Subjective Knowledge

Section 1.2.3 elucidated that there is a need to investigate the effects of the interaction between virtual communities and corporations in shaping consumer behavioural intentions towards

novel products. Importantly, the interaction of ILs emerging from the two institutional orders often spawns ILs dynamic. According to Greenwood et al. (2011), organisations face various pressures as a result of multiple ILs that are either synced or in conflict, a phenomenon referred to as *institutional complexity*. In particular, *logic conflict* has received significant attention from organisational scholars because when different institutional logics collide, it can lead to tensions, contradictions and challenges in organisational practices and decision-making (Thornton, 2002; Reay and Hinings, 2009; Besharov and Smith, 2014; Gümüşay et al., 2020).

This thesis commenced with an interest in how individuals would react to both the alignment and conflicts between different ILs, particularly in scenarios where institutional complexity arises from virtual communities and the interaction between virtual communities and corporations. An individual is naturally and inevitably assigned or engages in different roles in various organisations and institutional contexts (Goode, 1960), each of which may expose them to different ILs associated with the specific institutional orders the individual is part of (e.g., an individual plays the role of a husband in the family but an employee in the company). At the same time, individuals' intrinsic factors, such as subjective knowledge, influence decision-making (Rao and Monroe, 1988).

This implies that the interaction of ILs dynamic and consumers' subjective knowledge may profoundly influence individuals' cognition and behaviour together. However, no study has so far investigated how individuals respond to ILs dynamic (positive ILs synchronicity, negative ILs synchronicity, and ILs conflict) and how they reconcile and integrate the diverse ILs into their decision-making processes and actions, as well as what psychological mechanism drives their responses, setting the initial foundation for this study.

Making a prediction based on institutional theorists' arguments, the power of aligned ILs can create a cohesive narrative that resonates with individuals' cognition and behaviour (Minbaeva et al., 2021; Leite and Ingstrup, 2022). According to institutional theorists, if ILs within virtual communities or ILs between virtual communities and corporations show aligned ILs in one direction, it may influence and shape consumer behavioural intention towards novel products in that direction. However, when conflicting ILs arise within virtual communities or between virtual communities and corporations, the outcome of consumer behavioural intention remains uncertain and difficult to predict. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to investigate institutional theorists' arguments are contradictory by allowing consumers' subjective knowledge to triumph over environmental factors in the context of novel product consumption, although this research acknowledges the power of ILs on individual perception and behaviour formation.

To achieve the aforementioned goals, this thesis proposes that consumers' subjective knowledge is intertwined with ILs and that ILs have the ability to shape individuals' perceptions

of what is socially acceptable or desirable in terms of product consumption, thereby interacting with their subjective knowledge. The main objective of this study is to empirically examine whether and how the dynamics of ILs within virtual communities and/or between virtual communities and corporations influence consumers with varying subjective knowledge.

1.2.6 Psychological Mechanisms Explaining the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intention towards Novel Products in the Presence of ILs Synchronicity and ILs Conflict

This thesis seeks to understand psychological mechanisms that explain the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. This thesis anticipates contributing to the advancement of marketing research and generating novel perspectives for institutional theory by achieving this goal, with a particular emphasis on reshaping the perception of consumers and relevance within the framework of institutional processes. Indeed, numerous marketing studies, including Delmestri (2006), Meyer (2006), Lawrence et al. (2009), Slimane et al. (2019), and Ghaffari et al. (2019), have questioned the studies that explain consumers' perspectives and their influence on institutional processes by introducing the concept of institutional entrepreneurs, as exemplified by the works of Rao (1994) and Munir and Phillips (2005). A unanimous critique was escalated about the portrayal of institutional entrepreneurs as exceedingly influential agents capable of envisioning significant transformations in the institutional process while labelling other actors, such as consumers, as 'cultural dopes', which may not be the truth (Delmestri, 2006; Meyer, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2009; Slimane et al., 2019). This thesis aligns with earlier critiques while concurrently endorsing Ansari and Phillips' (2011) viewpoint that consumers' influence on institutional processes originates from their routine micro-level behaviours, even in the absence of deliberate and strenuous efforts aimed at shaping institutions. In essence, this thesis posits that consumers, acting collectively as social actors but with no intention of involving in institutional processes, have the ability to mobilise for the market diffusion of novel products. Such mobilisation has the potential to influence institutional changes, particularly in the concept of market dynamics. Continuing in this vein, this thesis attempts to understand psychological mechanisms that links consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intention towards novel products, with a focus on two constructs: choice confidence and justifiability. Identifying psychological mechanisms that facilitate consumers' collective mobilisation will help marketers leverage it and develop more potent and influential business strategies.

Choice confidence refers to one's self-assessed level of certainty in the accuracy of a decision (Heitmann et al., 2007), whereas justifiability refers to one's ability to provide reasoning for the chosen option (Heitmann et al., 2007). According to Heitmann et al. (2007), these two

constructs are firmly grounded in the goal-based choice model, which explains consumer motivation for product evaluation and choice. This model postulates that consumers' evaluations and product choices are influenced by their expectations of the benefits derived from product consumption (Van Osselaer and Janiszewski, 2012). These benefits function as goals, and the benefits provided by products are determined by how prominently these benefits are currently activated or brought to mind in an individual's memory at a particular moment. In this theoretical background, consumers' subjective knowledge has the potential to play a significant role in shaping consumers' goals.

To be specific, the process of goal setting draws on an individual's knowledge structure, which is an organised and interconnected accumulation of experiences stored in one's memory related to products (Jonassen and Wang, 1993). These experiences encompass a range of product-related knowledge and beliefs that reside within an individual's cognitive framework. According to Alba and Hutchinson (1987), a consumer's ability to make decisions is intricately linked to their understanding of the product, which is influenced by the degree of the consumer's perceived familiarity with the product. Individuals frequently become confused between what they know and what they are familiar with, and this aspect is encompassed within the realm of subjective knowledge (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). Thus, subjective knowledge is a vital component of the broader knowledge structure, playing an integral role in shaping consumer goals. In essence, consumers' subjective knowledge facilitates more efficient processing of new information (Johnson and Russo, 1984) and supports the use of compensatory decision-making strategies (Bettman and Park, 1980), ultimately boosting confidence in making preferred choices (Park and Lessig, 1981; Srinivasan and Ratchford, 1991). This emphasises the close relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and choice confidence. Consequently, in this thesis, choice confidence emerges as a psychological factor that serves as a bridge connecting consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions concerning novel products.

However, the primary focus of this thesis' research framework is on the consumption of novel products. These products are characterised not only by the degree of novelty but also by the uncertainty about the outcomes of purchasing them. Despite individuals' subjective knowledge of these novel products, which boosts their confidence in making product choices, there may be a contrasting aspect that can potentially dampen their confidence. This counteracting factor emerges from the possibility that their goals for these products may not be firmly activated (Van Osselaer et al., 2005). This thesis explains the situation that arises as a result of the challenges that individuals face when attempting to establish a coherent rationale for the advantages of consuming these novel products, particularly when relying solely on a part of their knowledge structure, namely subjective knowledge.

Indeed, the circumstances in which consumers find themselves have a significant impact on the formation and activation of their goal. According to Van Osselaer et al. (2005), the impact of specific goals on behaviour is highly variable, displaying a strong dependence on the context and substantial susceptibility to the effects of learning and forgetting processes. Cues from the surrounding environment can influence goal accessibility, and this thesis suggests that ILs have the potential to function as influential contextual cues for consumers. ILs will serve as a means to address the perceptual gap caused by the absence of well-established benefits for novel products, as well as to complement the lacked knowledge structure towards the products by understanding norms and beliefs about such products that are widely spread among the individuals in the society. Furthermore, in the context of psychological research, ILs act as either catalysts or hindrances in shaping individual behaviour, serving as a source of legitimacy known as justifiability (Bitektine and Song, 2023). ILs serve to inform and guide individuals by encapsulating prevalent norms and beliefs, fostering a perception of appropriateness within the societal framework. In other words, individuals perceive ILs as endorsed norms and beliefs about novel products, and they use them as contextual cues to shape their understanding and knowledge framework. This enhanced knowledge structure subsequently heightens the credibility of their product selection behaviour. Consequently, justifiability emerges as a crucial psychological factor that bridges the gap between consumer subjective knowledge and behaviour regarding novel products.

In summary, novel products are recognised as innovative offerings for which most consumers have a limited understanding and knowledge (Rindova and Petkova, 2007). Given the inherent characteristics of such products, which frequently lack distinct recognition in terms of functionality and necessity, consumers are likely to rely significantly on their subjective knowledge and ILs as a contextual cue to establish their goals by constructing a knowledge structure. In this process, the augmentation of choice confidence and justifiability arises, functioning as psychological mechanisms that link subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products. This thesis will reveal the psychological mechanisms of consumers in the presence of ILs dynamics, such as positively or negatively synchronised logics or conflicting ILs towards novel products, using the two psychological constructs-choice confidence and justifiability-and will reveal how consumers respond differently depending on their situational context.

1.2.7 Research Gap

This thesis aims to make significant theoretical and methodological contributions to the advancement of knowledge in the fields of marketing literature and institutional theories.

First, by incorporating the concept of IL into this thesis, which serves as a comprehensive lens encompassing individuals' assumptions, values, and beliefs, and elucidating how individuals attribute meaning to their daily activities, construct notions of time and space and reproduce life experiences (Thornton et al., 2012), this research will provide fresh insights into understanding consumer behavioural intention, particularly within the context of the novel products market.

Furthermore, institutional studies suggested that institutions within an inter-institutional system cannot be studied in isolation because they are mutually dependent and occasionally conflicting (Thornton et al., 2012). This research responds to this challenge by investigating how aligned and/or conflicting ILs within an institutional order (virtual communities) and between the two institutional orders-virtual communities and corporations-influence consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. By doing so, this thesis serves as a response to the preceding research argument in supporting that it is important to conduct research at both individual and organisational levels. In the midst of these discussions, the lens of IL will help in identifying the mechanisms that generate institutional effects across a multilevel theoretical framework, which is a novel approach not previously attempted in marketing domain.

Second, this thesis aims to identify the psychological factors that mediate the impact of ILs on individuals, with choice confidence and justifiability identified as potential mediators. Exploring the psychological mechanisms that interact with ILs and consumer behavioural intention in this thesis will be a novel attempt to help bridge the gap between institutional theory, which is prevalent in management and organisational studies, and consumer behaviour research in the marketing domain.

The findings of this thesis will highlight the significance of the individual-level analysis in institutional research, as well as the partial autonomy of consumers exerting in institutional changes, especially in the market. These findings complement previous studies that emphasise individual power while focusing on the role of institutional entrepreneurs, who are characterised as logical challengers who use resources to effect institutional change. This thesis will shed light on the diverse and context-dependent nature of social actors who lack the intention and resources to effect institutional change but have a strong potential to do so, as proposed in recent studies (Martí and Fernández, 2013; Ghaffari et al., 2019).

Finally, this thesis contributes to the literature by tackling new methodology challenges. Previous management and organisational studies that primarily used institutional theory to examine conflicting ILs between or within institutional orders dominantly employed descriptive case studies to offer recommendations for managing tensions and contradictions arising from such conflicts, as well as their impact on organisational behaviour and outcomes (Ashraf et al.,

2017; Berggren and Karabag, 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Dahmann and Grosvold, 2017). However, this thesis takes a unique approach by empirically investigating the influence of ILs on consumer behavioural intentions, an area that has received little attention in previous marketing research. The thesis seeks to uncover the intricate interplay between ILs and consumers' behavioural intentions by venturing into this methodologically unexplored territory within marketing research, that is, empirical testing through experiments, and expands not only the theoretical boundaries but also methodological approaches in the field, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of ILs on consumers' behavioural intentions.

In summary, this section has discussed the potential of ILs to provide valuable insights into understanding consumers' behavioural intentions, particularly in the context of the novel products market. It has emphasised the explanatory power of ILs in shedding light on consumers' behavioural intention as well as their contribution to the field of marketing research. The theoretical gap identified in this section has highlighted the disparities between institutional theory and group conflict studies within the marketing domain in terms of individual perspectives. This highlights the notion of individuals as both inter-institutional system molecules and rational consumers. At the same time, it is acknowledged that individuals have the potential to influence market dynamics beyond the future growth of products. Therefore, this study aims to examine consumers' behavioural intentions when confronted with ILs dynamic between two institutional orders, virtual communities, and corporations, while also incorporating a deeper understanding of individual psychological mechanisms.

The following section outlines the specific research objectives and questions that aim to address the previously mentioned gaps in the existing literature.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

This research aims to understand how the dynamic of virtual community logics and interaction between virtual community logics and corporation logics (positive ILs synchronicity, negative ILs synchronicity and ILs conflict) affect the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and behaviour towards novel products. This research also seeks to identify psychological mechanisms that mediate this relationship, such as choice confidence and justifiability.

To achieve the research aims, a set of research objectives have been developed as follows:

RO1: To explore, conceptualise and empirically test the effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on behavioural intentions towards novel products.

RO2: To explore, conceptualise and empirically test how virtual communities and corporations play a role in influencing behavioural intentions towards novel products depending on varying consumers' subjective knowledge.

RO3: To explore, conceptualise and empirically test the underlying psychological mechanism that mediates consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Accordingly, the following set of research questions are formulated:

RQ1: Is consumers' subjective knowledge a crucial factor influencing consumers' behavioural intention towards novel product consumption, and how does the existing literature explain this relationship?

RQ2: How does the virtual community logics synchronicity (positive or negative) formed by (a) novel product experts and (b) the members discussing novel products within virtual communities affect consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products?

RQ3: How does the coexistence of virtual community logics synchronicity (positive vs. negative) formed by influential individuals of the novel products within virtual communities and a corporation logics synchronicity (positive vs negative) formed by influential corporations in the novel product market affect the consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products?

RQ4: How does the coexistence of virtual community logics conflict (vs synchronicity) and a corporation logics conflict (vs synchronicity) around novel products affect the consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products?

RQ5: Does choice confidence and justifiability mediate the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products and what is the psychological rationale behind it?

Based on the developed research objectives and research questions, a conceptual model presenting the theoretical framework is proposed as follows (Figure 5).

1.4 Theoretical Framework

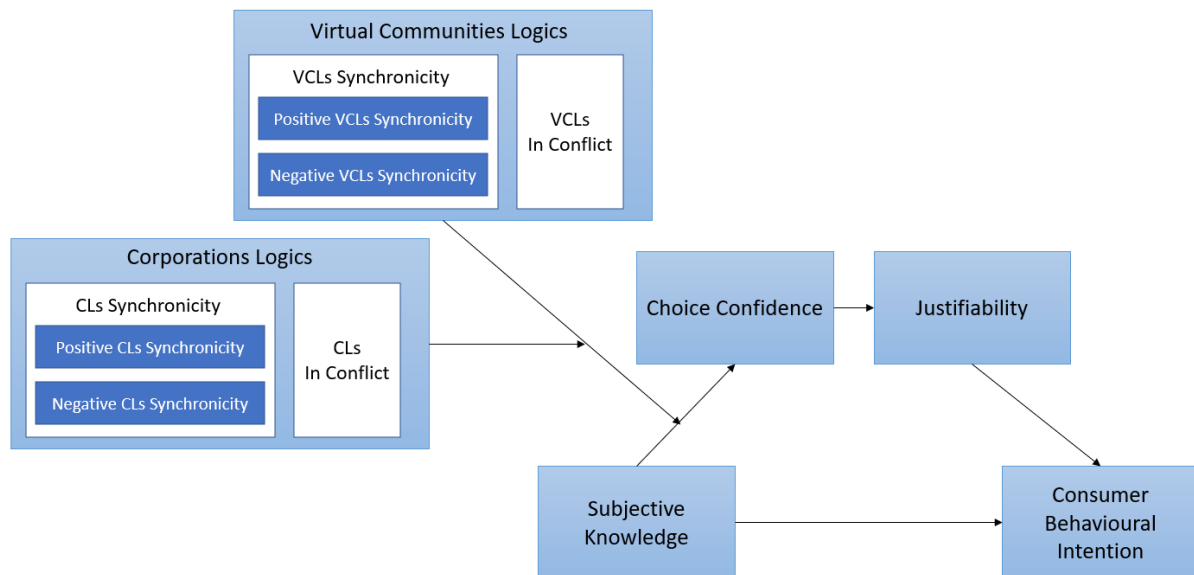


Figure 5 Thesis Conceptual Model

1.5 Structure Summary of Thesis

Chapter 1 outlines the research interest, motivation, and area. The main research question and objectives are presented in the introduction based on the research relevance, rationale, and gap. The theoretical framework summarises the research hypotheses to be tested in this research. Chapter 2 supports the framework underpinning this study through the literature review. The literature review on novel product consumption, institutional theory, ILs and subjective knowledge and psychological factors underlying novel product consumption such as choice confidence, and justifiability serves to connect the logics behind the proposed conceptual framework. Based on the literature review, hypotheses for this thesis were developed.

Chapter 3 delineates the research philosophy and methodology used in this study, adopting a positivist, deductive and quantitative approach to obtain and expand knowledge. The different types of experimental studies and their pros and cons are discussed, as well as why and how this study attempts to achieve good external and internal validity.

Chapter 4 presents the four online experimental studies, including the study design, stimuli development, procedure, analysis, and results. Discussions and the key findings from the analysis result are also suggested. It combines the findings of the literature review and empirical tests. The findings of each of the four experimental studies are thoroughly discussed and answer the research questions.

Chapter 1

Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical and managerial contributions based on the discussions on the study results and their limitations. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future researchers and future directions.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature on the variables included in the theoretical framework, namely subjective knowledge, institutional orders (with a focus on virtual communities and corporations), ILs dynamic, choice confidence, and justifiability. This chapter will formulate the hypotheses based on the literature review.

2.1 Innovation and Novel Products

This section provides a comprehensive review of the marketing literature on product innovation, with a focus on technologically innovative products. This investigation delves into the underlying factors that have led previous research to focus primarily on technologically driven innovations. This supports the need to discuss novel products in relation to technologically advanced offerings in this thesis. This section also investigates the challenges associated with the market diffusion of such innovations, attributing these challenges to the degree of novelty inherent in these products. Furthermore, this section provides a comprehensive understanding of novel products in relation to individuals' novelty-seeking behaviour, emphasising its dual role in obstructing and promoting the adoption of novel products. The theoretical relationship between novelty-seeking behaviour and consumers' subjective knowledge, which serves as a motivating factor for novel product consumption, was also investigated. Based on this theoretical foundation, hypotheses were formulated and proposed for investigating the potential relationships between these constructs.

2.1.1 Technologically Innovative Products and the Degree of Novelty

Innovativeness is important not only at the individual level but also in market shaping because it encourages individuals to deviate from routine purchase decisions and adopt a dynamic approach to product considerations (Hirschman, 1980). With these advantages, numerous disciplines, including engineering (Agarwal et al., 2020; Coccia et al., 2022), marketing (Xie and Wang, 2020; Rese et al., 2022), management (Wiwoho et al., 2020; Chaithanapat et al., 2022) and economics (Hémous and Olsen, 2022; Zheng et al., 2022), involve studies on providing what is considered an innovation and what factors draw

innovation. In particular, *technological innovations* have received a lot of attention in marketing research as a way to replace outdated technologies and bring about significant changes in the market (Schumpeter, 1942).

Consumers recognise the potential benefits of technologically innovative products more prominently because they believe these products can meet their needs, solve their problems, or improve their experiences (Grewal et al., 2020) although non-technological attributes such as aesthetics (e.g., colour, shape, and texture) and symbolic elements can also contribute to a product's innovativeness (Hirschman, 1982; Eisenman, 2013). This perception arises from the belief that these products embody the latest advancements and represent cutting-edge solutions (Höflinger et al., 2018). However, the S-curve (Figure 6), which is derived from theories of technology evolution, explains that the diffusion of such products is often demanding (Veryzer, 1998; Forés and Camisón, 2016; Ringberg et al., 2019).

Figure 2 Idealized S-Curves for Technological Evolution

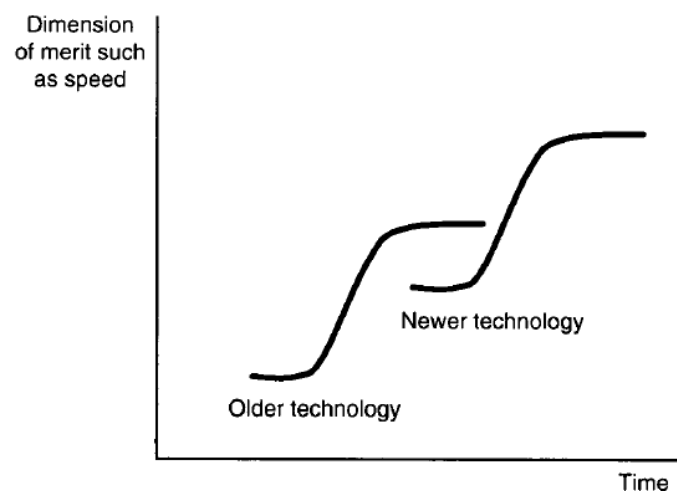


Figure 6 S-curves for Technological Evolution (Figure Adopted from Rogers, 1962, p 150.)

The S-curve shows how technological innovation progresses over time, from its early, slow beginnings to an acceleration phase and eventual stabilisation, with corresponding improvements in performance (Veryzer, 1998). There is a point of discontinuity in the S-curves depicted in Figure 6, where the old and new technologies overlap due to the emergence of a new sustaining technology (Rogers, 1962). The point of discontinuity in the S-curves, also known as the technological transition or technology gap, signifies a critical juncture where individuals may exhibit hesitations and concerns regarding the acceptance of technologically advanced products (Rogers, 1962).

The technology acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) explains what hinders individuals' acceptance of technologically innovative products and suggests that people's perceptions of product utility and ease of use in performing tasks act as barriers (Song et al., 2009; Kulviwat et al., 2014; Oyman et al., 2022). This thesis suggests that the degree of novelty is a barrier that causes consumers to feel uneasy and hesitate when thinking about adopting innovative products. *Novelty* refers to 'the quality of being new and unusual' and 'something that has not been experienced before and so is interesting' (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). Although the concept of novelty has been used in interdisciplinary literature, there is no universally accepted definition of novelty because the interpretation of novelty varies depending on what the research field aims for due to its subjective and complex psychological aspects (Mandler, 1997, Skavronskaya et al., 2020). However, the concept of novelty has been developed and shared as being new or unusual in contrast to the concept of familiarity in diverse literature (Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; Lee et al., 2015; Stathopoulou et al., 2017). Importantly, whether the innovation is radical or incremental, all innovative products have a certain level of novelty (Tiberius et al., 2021). The two definitions of innovation, presented by pioneering marketing scholars and summarised in Table 1, support that the degree of novelty is a key component of product innovation.

Table 1 Different Definitions of Innovativeness

Pioneering Scholars	Definition of Innovativeness
Rogers and Shoemaker (1971, p. 19)	'An idea, practice, or object perceived as <i>new</i> by the individual.'
Midgley and Dowling (1978, p. 236)	'The degree to which an individual is receptive to <i>new</i> ideas and makes innovation decisions independently of the communicated experience of others.'

These definitions converge on a common element: *innovativeness* refers to the extent to which a person is receptive to new ideas, perceives an idea or object as novel and autonomously makes decisions about innovation. Thus, the research for this thesis will focus on how closely the degree of novelty and innovative products are related. To precisely define the subject within the context of this thesis, *innovative products characterised by their degree of novelty* will be referred to as *novel products* throughout this research. Innovation stands out because it is a driving force behind changes in form, function or behaviour as opposed to novelty, which may involve simple incremental changes to already existing products (Allen and Sriram, 2000). This thesis also focuses on novel products within the

category of technologically advanced innovative products and novelty of technology. Indeed, technologically advanced innovative products are more ostensible for consumer behaviour, compelling companies to redefine their business models and transform industries. The iPhone serves as a classic exemplary case of a novel product within the context of this thesis. It employed novel technology, the multi-touch display, which transformed the way users interacted with mobile devices (Sviokla and Calkins, 2008). This adoption of novel technology to products not only reshaped the cell phone industry but also had a significant impact on consumer preferences, making physical keypad phones increasingly uncommon. This shows the long-lasting effects of such novel technological advancements (Dawar, 2013).

The following section will examine the close connection between novel products and people's innate desire for novelty. It will clarify how consumers behave when seeking out novel products and further delve into the role of subjective knowledge as a psychological motivator behind the pursuit of novel products.

2.1.2 Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products: Insights from Human Nature of Novelty-Seeking

The degree of novelty associated with innovative products exhibits a dualistic nature in the adoption process, exerting both inhibiting and facilitating effects on consumer acceptance (Violina et al., 2007). This phenomenon has garnered significant attention within the realm of consumer behaviour research, as it is intricately linked to the innate human inclination towards novelty-seeking (Manning et al., 1995; Bao et al., 2003; Assaker et al., 2011).

In the medical domain, novelty seeking is acknowledged as a biologically rooted inclination exhibited by both humans and animals to explore novel and unfamiliar stimuli and environments (Davis et al., 2008). Flavell (1977) acknowledges novelty seeking as an innate trait that manifests in behaviour as early as infancy, highlighting its significance in human development. Bringing this to social science, Hirschman's (1980) definition of innovativeness, which draws upon the work of Midgley and Dowling (1978), further substantiates the definition of novelty seeking viewed in the medical field. He defines innovativeness as 'a personality construct possessed to a greater or lesser degree by all individuals.' (Hirschman, 1980, p. 284). His definition of innovativeness provides valuable insights into the varying degrees of innovativeness that individuals exhibit. He views innovation as an inherent personal trait of individuals and introduces the concept of novelty

seeking as an internal psychological motivator that induces individuals to actively find new information. Comprehensibly, novelty seeking is a fundamental characteristic of human nature, which compels individuals to explore and seek out new and unfamiliar stimuli and environments. However, the question of why humans are led to seek novelty remains unanswered.

2.1.2.1 Reasons behind Novelty-Seeking Behaviour and its Correlation with Consumer Knowledge

Responding to the curiosity stated above, Hirschman (1980) posits two ground motives of novelty-seeking behaviour, based on insights grounded in the psychological literature: (a) to accumulate potential useful knowledge and (b) to improve present problem-solving. The first motivation outlines how novelty seeking aids in self-preservation. Individuals may find it advantageous to amass a store of potentially valuable knowledge because the future is inherently uncertain and unexpected. Individuals are better prepared to deal with unforeseen challenges when they seek information that may not be immediately relevant but may be crucial in novel circumstances (Hirschman, 1980). Hirschman (1980) substantiates his assertion, utilising a consumer behavioural approach, that individuals seek novelty through a systematic process. In this process, consumers store information through (a) the vicarious adoption of unfamiliar product concepts, (b) the vicarious experiencing of unfamiliar consumption situations, (c) the actual adoption of novel products and (d) personal exposure to novel consumption situations.

The second ground motive for novelty seeking is to enhance problem-solving ability (Hirschman, 1980). In this scenario, consumers seek information on products and consumption situations they are currently using in an effort to improve their performance. This rationale for novelty seeking adequately explains why consumers seek information about novel products and adopt innovative products. By delving into the two fundamental drivers behind novelty-seeking behaviour—namely, the desire to amass potentially valuable knowledge and enhance existing problem-solving capabilities—it becomes evident why it is inevitable for individuals to seek novel products when they engage in consumption.

Furthermore, it becomes apparent that in tandem with these fundamental motives, consumers actively participate in exploring and amassing information, contributing to their knowledge formation. Indeed, consumer knowledge has been recognised as a critical component in shaping consumers' perceptions and willingness to accept novel products in consumer research (Herzenstein and Hoeffler, 2016; Murphy and Dweck, 2016; Zhang et al.,

2020). This is because the novelty-seeking behaviour is inextricably linked to consumers' inclination to learn about products and their features to solve current or future problems. The upcoming section further explores consumer knowledge to substantiate the correlation between consumer knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products.

2.1.2.2 Types of Consumer Knowledge: Objective Knowledge vs Subjective Knowledge

With the evolution of scholarly inquiry on consumer knowledge, different types of knowledge exerting divergent influences on consumption behaviour have emerged as well (Brucks, 1985; Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; Bearden et al., 2001; Carlson et al., 2009). In response, a type of consumer knowledge was developed, with two prominent streams of knowledge being identified: objective knowledge and subjective knowledge. According to Moorman et al.'s (2004) summarisation, objective knowledge refers to accurate stored information based on consumers ability or expertise about the products or services. Contrarily, subjective knowledge refers to 'self-beliefs about their own knowledge' based on expertise, experience, and other factors (Alba and Hutchinson, 2000, p. 123). In other words, objective knowledge reflects what consumers know, and subjective knowledge reflects what consumers believe they know. As a result, subjective knowledge, unlike objective information, may include some miscalibration of absolute knowledge, although subjective knowledge judgements are partially based on objective knowledge (Radecki and Jaccard, 1995; Alba and Hutchinson, 2000). Despite the influence of both types of consumer knowledge on the consumption of novel products, this thesis emphasises subjective knowledge and its impact on the consumption of such products, establishing a connection with the product characteristics, represented by a lack of perceived familiarity, which will be explained in the following section.

2.1.2.3 Consumers' Perceived Product Familiarity as a Cause for Ambivalent behavioural intentions towards Novel Products, and the Correlation Between Subjective Knowledge and Perceived Product Familiarity

In the earlier section of 2.1.2.1, the argument was put forth, drawing on theoretical foundations made by previous researchers, that consumers actively seek novelty in products, propelled by an inherent aspect of human nature. However, scholars in business research on innovation consistently argue that the degree of novelty either attracts consumers to choose such products or induces hesitancy and resistance to adoption (Brucks, 1985; Sitkin, 1992; Atuahene-Gima, 1997; Moorman et al., 2004; Carlson et al.,

2009; Park et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2014). This is attributed to the perception that the adoption of novel products is often perceived as more mentally and physically demanding (Rogers et al., 2014). Park and Lessig (1981) elucidate the rationale behind this duality of novelty and its impact on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products purchase intentions, introducing the concept of *product familiarity*, which is consumer's perceived familiarity towards products.

Park and Lessig (1981) outline two fundamental dimensions of product familiarity. The first dimension pertains to how much a person knows about the product, referred to as objective knowledge in this thesis, employing established terminology from previous literature (Moorman et al., 2004). The second-dimension centres on an individual's perception of how much they believe they know about the product, termed as subjective knowledge in this thesis, a concept established by the research of Radecki and Jaccard (1995) and Alba and Hutchinson (2000). Concerning the former dimension of product familiarity, specifically consumers' assessment of *the amount of knowledge* about products (objective knowledge), exploration may be directed towards the knowledge structure within an individual's long-term memory. In contrast, the latter dimension, *self-assessed familiarity* (subjective knowledge), relies on an individual's self-reported assessment of their perceived knowledge about the product (Lichtenstein and Fischhoff, 1977). In alignment with this, it was argued that objective knowledge contributes to comprehending the impact of memory contents on consumers' evaluations and their choice decisions (Park and Lessig, 1981). Meanwhile, subjective knowledge provides consumers with insights into their systematic biases and heuristics in product evaluation and choice (Park and Lessig, 1981).

Given that novel products are relatively new and unfamiliar to both individuals and the market, meaning there is little chance individuals have long-term memories about novel products, this thesis posits that subjective knowledge will play a more significant role in influencing consumers' behavioural intentions in the context of novel product consumption. This is because when individuals navigate virtual environments driven by their innate instinct for novelty-seeking, and during this process (Hirschman, 1980), whether intentionally or unintentionally, they encounter information about novel products. This exposure prompts the formation of their own interpretations, emotions, and beliefs regarding these novel products (Friestad and Wright, 1994; Kempf and Smith, 1998). In other words, these perceptions of various elements surrounding novel products will enhance their self-assessed familiarity with novel products, thereby it may influence their evaluation of novel product features and characteristics. Importantly, this iterative process contributes to the

development and enhancement of their subjective knowledge (Mahr and Lievens, 2012). Consequently, subjective knowledge emerges as a potent construct, possessing a heightened capacity to encompass a diverse range of perceived aspects related to novel products.

2.1.2.4 Subjective Knowledge as an Enhancer of Consumers' Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products

In alignment with the interconnectedness between consumers' perceived product familiarity and their subjective knowledge suggested in Section 2.1.2.3, the potency of subjective knowledge is recognised as a construct capable of mitigating the sense of unfamiliarity for consumers, as supported by Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory. This theory elucidates how individuals evaluate potential risks and rewards in decision-making processes (Rao and Monroe, 1988; Pieniak et al., 2010; Flavián et al., 2021). According to prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), when consumers confront a risky decision with potential gains, they often opt for a certain outcome with lower expected utility due to their risk aversion.

As discussed in Section 2.1.2.3, consumers frequently perceive the adoption of novel products as burdensome due to a lack of familiarity (Brucks, 1985; Sitkin, 1992; Atuahene-Gima, 1997; Moorman et al., 2004; Carlson et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2014). However, an increase of subjective knowledge, closely tied to *perceived* familiarity, can positively affect consumers' beliefs in their expertise, performance, and ability to use such products (Rao and Sieben, 1992; Wang and Hazen, 2016). This, in turn, mitigates the perception of loss associated with such products. O'Cass and Frost (2002)'s work provides empirical evidence that subjective knowledge about products fosters a sense of familiarity, positively impacting purchasing decisions.

Once again, to bolster the argument of this thesis, by drawing on Alba and Hutchinson's (1987) definition of familiarity as 'the number of product-related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer' (p. 411), this thesis establishes the inseparable linkage between consumers' perceived familiarity and their subjective knowledge. Their definition on familiarity highlights the potent of subjective knowledge as a mitigator of perceived familiarity deficiency. Consequently, subjective knowledge may serve as an enhancer for consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products by intensifying their perception that they can differentiate alternatives, enhance information analysis, and reduce cognitive effort. Based on the review of previous literature, this thesis hypothesises that consumers with higher

levels of subjective knowledge are more likely to feel certain and comfortable with novel products, thereby reducing their perceived risk and increasing their likelihood of making a purchase. Similarly, when consumers with higher levels of subjective knowledge encounter novel products, they are less likely to procrastinate the adoption of the products because they will feel more certain and familiar with novel products, which can increase their perceived expertise, performance, and ability to use such products, thereby facilitating consumers' acceptance of such products. The following hypotheses are posited based on the aforementioned discussion.

H1a. Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have higher (lower) purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products.

H1b. Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will evaluate the corresponding novel products positively (negatively).

H1c. Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be less (more) likely to procrastinate the adoption of the corresponding novel products.

H1d. Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be more (less) interested in the corresponding novel products.

2.1.2.5 Rationales and Choices of Dependent Variables

In this section, a theoretical rationale is presented for the selection of the four dependent variables for H1a to H1d proposed in Section 2.1.2.4. Each hypothesis examines four variables representing consumer behavioural intentions towards novel products: (a) purchase intention, (b) product evaluation, (c) adoption procrastination, and (d) product interest. The explanation not only establishes the basis for these dependent variables but also lays the groundwork for their use in future hypotheses formulations in this thesis. The rationale behind choosing these variables is as follows.

To initiate, *purchase intention* is a construct reflecting a robust mindset that is more prone to manifest in actual purchase behaviour, rendering it a significant factor in comprehending consumer decision-making (Chandon et al., 2005). In fact, the field of psychology substantiates that measuring individuals' predictions of their future behaviour is a reliable method for forecasting actual behaviour (Armstrong et al., 2000). Anchored on this, marketing researchers dominantly adopt purchase intention as a construct predicting consumer behaviour as a construct indicating a heightened commitment and determination

to make an actual purchase in order to give managerial implication in terms of predicting the success and future sales of a new product launch for marketing managers (Penny et al., 1972, Gormley, 1974; Tauber, 1975, Warshaw, 1980). There are concerns of predictive validity associated with the reliance on intention measures, particularly in terms of whether intentions expressed at a specific point in time correlate with future purchase events (Juster, 1966; Adams and Juster, 1974; McNeil, 1974; Kalwani and Silk, 1982). However, a social psychological model of attitudes, such as theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), theoretically establishes the use of purchase intention as a dependable predictor of consumer behaviour. This model posits that the most dependable predictor of an individual's behaviour is a measurement of their intention to engage in that behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). This theoretical backing justifies the use of purchase intention hence, this thesis adopts purchase intention as one of dependent variables to predict behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Second, *product evaluation* involves consumers' assessments of products, encompassing judgments about the products' features, quality, and overall appeal (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). Individuals make decisions by combining perceived information from various sources with their own evaluative criteria, and this evaluation relies on the evaluative information perceived by consumers regarding products. In particular, when consumers have limited experience with a particular choice or when a choice is challenging, such as in the case of novel product consumption, individuals utilise a constructive mechanism which explains humans tend to remember the core ideas presented to them rather than the exact form of the information used to convey those ideas (Bettman, 1979; Bettman and Park, 1980; Payne et al., 1992; Slovic, 1995; Tversky et al., 1988). This views humans as bounded rational decision-makers (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991; Simon 1955), aligning with how this thesis perceives consumers. Moreover, the heuristics used for constructive mechanism posits that individuals evaluate products using fragments, elements, or rules stored in their memory which may evolve as actual purchase (Bettman et al., 1998). These fragments or elements are assembled from the information accessible in the particular choice scenario and the ease with which various pieces of information can be processed. Therefore, product evaluation is closely related to the consumption context investigating in this thesis, as this thesis argues that individuals learn about novel products which is characterised as limited experience for individuals during their online activities due to the accessibility virtual environments has. Thus, intentionally, or unintentionally, individuals build and store fragments and elements in their memory and these helps their product evaluation which may

facilitate their future purchases (Bettman et al., 1998). Emphasising the theoretical interconnectedness between the characteristics of the consumption context and the constructive mechanism, this thesis highlights the more prominent role of product evaluation in novel product consumption situations as a crucial metric for indicating consumer behavioural intentions. Therefore, it was chosen as one of the dependent variables and it will provide more practical insights for marketing managers in the novel products industry.

Third, *adoption procrastination* carries significant implications for both the practical aspects of innovation and marketing research as it delves into the factors underpinning consumers' deliberate postponement of their intentions to embrace novel products, ultimately resulting in the constrained diffusion of innovations (Xiao and Spanjol, 2021). As discussed in Section 2.1.2.3, the degree of novelty causes hesitancy in product adoption due to the lack of familiarity and uncertainty of purchase consequences. In other words, novel product consumption is somewhat inhibited by consumers' concerns about the unfamiliarity and potential risks associated with the adoption. Consequently, gaining an understanding of the factors contributing to adoption procrastination becomes crucial for devising strategies that can enhance the acceptance and diffusion of novel products in the market. Therefore, this thesis designates adoption procrastination as a dependent variable, anticipating that insights derived from the study results will provide valuable guidance for addressing and mitigating adoption procrastination.

Finally, *product interest* reflects the level of consumer interest in a product, indicating the extent to which consumers are intrigued and captivated by the product (Hamilton et al., 2011). According to Rogers (2003)'s theory of individual innovativeness, the social system continually generates new information, and individuals tend to perceive and adopt new technology within their social environments, contributing to the diffusion of innovation in society. In this process, individuals are driven by various sensory information or needs to adopt an innovation (Vandecasteele and Geunes, 2010). Motivated individuals express their willingness to adopt innovation through enthusiasm and product interest (Salari and Shiu, 2015). Particularly, adoptive innovativeness, which is one aspect of innate innovativeness reflecting an individual's tendency to be innovative, suggests that consumers' product interest plays a pivotal role in innovative product adoption and diffusion (Roehrich, 2004; Seyed Esfahani and Reynolds, 2021). Therefore, this thesis selects product interest as one of the dependent variables, considering it as an attitude reflecting consumers' motivation to adopt novel products.

The upcoming hypotheses in this thesis will measure consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products using the four variables chosen in this section. By doing so, this thesis seeks to facilitate a broader understanding of the effects of predictors on consumer behaviour in the context of novel products.

2.2 Institutional Theory

This section provides a comprehensive overview of institutional theory, which serves as the theoretical foundation for the concept of ILs, which will be used as the theoretical lens in this thesis. By tracing the historical development of institutional theory, the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of institution and the concept of institutional entrepreneur, which is extended from the institutional theory. Furthermore, this section explores the potential role of individuals as actors with the capacity to influence and change the institutional environment. The insights derived from this exploration may be applicable to marketing research, particularly within the specific context of this thesis, which focuses on novel product consumption. The comprehensive understanding of institutional theory and the intrinsic attributes of institution lay the groundwork for formulating hypotheses to be presented subsequently.

2.2.1 Development of Institutional Theory

Institutional theory emerged in response to the limitations of neoclassical economic theory, which originated in the late 19th century (Selznick, 1996). According to Neoclassical economic theory, individuals and organisations make rational decisions driven by self-interest and profit maximisation (Simon, 1986). In contrast, institutional theory, developed in the early 20th century, places greater emphasis on the complex nature of social behaviour exhibited by both individuals and organisations, noting that rational decision-making is not always one's sole determinant (Selznick, 1996). Institutional theory seeks to provide a deeper comprehension of both organizational and individual behaviours by taking into account the broader social and institutional influences that shape them. It moves away from the assumptions of neoclassical economic theory, which suggests that individuals always make rational decisions. Instead, institutional theory emphasises the significance of factors such as social norms, values, and rules in shaping the actions of both individuals and organisations (Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997).

As institutional theory developed over time, two distinct approaches emerged: old institutional theory and new institutional theory (Selznick, 1996). *Old institutional theory*, which gained prominence in sociology and political science during the 1920s and 1930s, emphasises the role of formal institutions such as regulations and laws in shaping behaviour within organisations or societies (Spencer, 1910; Merton, 1936; Hughes, 1939). The old institutional theory highlights the role of institutions in exerting influence and pressure on individuals and organisations to conform to established norms and rules. Thus, organisations and individuals within organisations were considered passive objects oppressed by the external pressure.

New institutional theory, a school that developed afterwards, emerged in the early 1970s as scholars in the fields of organisation and institution studies sought to incorporate insights from the old institutional theory while embracing the open system theory (Katz and Kahn, 1966). Open system theory, introduced by von Bertalanffy in 1967, emphasises the significant impact of external forces, including economic, political, and social factors, on organisational environments. This theory highlights the interdependence between organisations and their external environments, acknowledging that organisations are influenced by and must respond to external factors to achieve efficient decision-making (Bertalanffy, 1967). Adopting the argument of open system theory, new institutional theorists, such as Powell and DiMaggio (1991) and Scott (1995), have recognised the importance of considering both the internal and external organisational environments in understanding organisational dynamics. As a result, the new institutional theory highlights the significance of informal factors in shaping organisational behaviour, as opposed to the old institutional theory, which underlines the role of formal rules and regulations (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1995). By considering organisations and individuals as proactive subjects that can respond to the influence of culture and social norms, such as shared beliefs, values, and norms that are prevalent within a given institutional context, the new institutional theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of how institutions impact and guide individuals and organisational behaviour and practices (Selznick, 1996). In particular, new institutional theory contends that individuals and organisations tend to conform to the norms and structures of their institutional environment, in shaping behaviour within organisations, suggesting three key components that serve as the cornerstone of this argument's perspective: (a) legitimacy, (b) institutional rules and (c) isomorphism.

The first key element of new institutional theory, *legitimacy*, refers to 'conformity to the law, to rules, or to some recognised principle, lawfulness, conformity to sound reasoning,

logicality, justifiability' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.). Individuals conform to certain ideas or norms they perceive as fact or taken-for-granted rules, which may stem from legal frameworks or the cultural systems of their society. This conformity fosters the creation of legitimacy within individuals, subsequently enhancing the organisation's or its structures' survival and prosperity. Legitimacy is a source of resilience for institutions, providing a foundation for their continued functioning and acceptance within a given social context (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

According to Scott (1995) and Suchman (1995), legitimacy takes three forms: (a) regulative, (b) normative and (c) cultural-cognitive. Regulatory legitimacy refers to being sanctioned by explicit rules or policies, whereas normative legitimacy refers to the congruence between the social values associated with or implied by actors and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the more extensive social system (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). Cultural-cognitive legitimacy refers to the degree of fit with existing cognitive and cultural schema. Comprehensively, the more individuals and organisations adhere to and align with social rules, policies, values, and cultural contexts, the better their legitimacy and the more justified their existence. However, it remains unclear how organisations grasp their legitimacy.

New institutional theory provides an explanation by suggesting that organisations seek legitimacy by conforming to *institutional rules*, that is the second key element of institutional theory, within their cultural contexts, thereby reducing uncertainty and conforming to social pressures. As a result, many organisations and institutions exhibit similar forms and relationships, a phenomenon referred to as *isomorphism*, the third key element of institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The early stage of new institutional theory focuses on how organisations progressively respond to the external isomorphic pressures from decisive factors and actors within their institutional environment. As the theory progresses, efforts were made to elaborate on these isomorphic pressures by proposing structured isomorphism with three pillars (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983): (a) mimetic, (b) normative and (c) coercive isomorphisms. Mimetic and normative isomorphism imply that social relations are patterned, and the free initiative of individuals and organisations is constrained. However, coercive isomorphism emphasises actors' ability to effect institutionalisation, such as rule alteration, relational ties, or distribution of resources, by admitting powerful regulatory actors as an agency (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Through the classification of isomorphism, it becomes evident that institutional theory highlights how the dynamics and stability of institutional environments significantly influence

the behaviour of individuals and organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). It implies that their behaviours are shaped and influenced by the institutional norms, rules, and pressures present in their environment. Simultaneously, within the boundary of institutional theory, individuals and organisations are considered *partially autonomous* elements in their institutional system (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This suggests that they possess some degree of freedom in their actions and decisions.

In summary, institutional theory sheds light on what influences the behaviour of individuals and organisations, and the two approaches of old institutional theory and new institutional theory emphasise different aspects of formal versus informal aspects of institutional environment, respectively, focusing on power versus cultural and social factors. Old institutional theory highlights the importance of organisations complying to institutional norms and social expectations to establish and sustain legitimacy, with the belief that these provide social systems with stability and predictability. In contrast, new institutional theory suggests that organisations are more likely to adapt to evolving institutional environments to thrive and endure. This perspective considers the elements that comprise the institutional environment, namely individuals and organisations, more flexible and dynamic; thus, a nuanced and contextual understanding of individuals' and organisations' behaviour within institutional contexts is required. It recognises that organisations are not rigid structures and must navigate and respond to changing institutional dynamics to achieve success and longevity. To summarise, although both the old and the new institutional theories maintain their influence over academic research and practical applications, they diverge in their viewpoints. The former highlights the importance of formal rules and regulations in shaping organisational behaviours, whereas the latter considers organisations as proactive entities, emphasising their informal aspects for influencing organisational behaviour in the institutional context.

Notably, the adoption of the new institutional theory becomes more prominent in management and organisational research (Kondra and Hinings, 1998; Tina Dacin et al., 2002; Meyer and Höllerer, 2014; David et al., 2019). This research field believes that organisations have value in improving individuals' lives, cultures, and social systems, recognising them as active social entities rather than passive ones (Schein, 1996). This perspective somewhat overlaps with how marketing researchers view organisations (i.e., firms) and consumers. Alongside the dominant application of new institutional theory in adjacent research fields closely related to marketing studies, this thesis aims to examine how individuals interpret and respond to institutional rules and norms and shape their behaviour. In pursuit of this

investigation, it will adhere to the perspective of new institutional theory rather than old institutional theory. Based on the viewpoint of new institutional theory, the following section will define the institution and explain the attribute of institution.

2.2.2 Definition of Institution

The dictionary definition of an institution is 'a custom or system that is considered an important or typical feature of a particular society or group, usually because it has existed for a long time' (*Collins Dictionary*, n.d.). Although there is no unified definition of the institution due to its conceptual diversity and ambiguity (Scott, 1995), several definitions put forward by influential institutional theorists are still commonly used in institutional research. For example, Friedland and Alford (1991) refer to institutions as 'a supra-organisational pattern of human activity by which individuals and organisations produce and reproduce their material subsistence and organise time and space' and 'symbolic systems, ways of ordering reality, and thereby rendering the experience of time and space meaningful' (Friedland and Alford, 1991, p. 243). Jepperson (1991, p. 143) refers to institutions to 'represent a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property' and those are 'social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating social processes'. Similarly, Scott (2001) defines institutions as 'social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience' and 'transmitted by various carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines, and artefacts' (Scott, 2001, p. 48). Interestingly, Lawrence and Phillips's (2004, p. 646) work makes actors stand out, defining institutions as 'persistent practices, understandings, and rules shared by actors in an organisational field'.

The existence of several commonalities among the four distinct definitions suggests a meaningful comprehension of institutions. Initially, in these definitions, the notion of an institution might seem static. This perception arises from its association with structured social orders or systems and its portrayal as a persistent pattern characterised by resilience and ongoing practice through a chronical producing and reproducing process. Nonetheless, each definition includes the term "symbol," suggesting that an institution is not a rigid or stable concept. This is consistent with the new institutional theory's emphasis on the informal aspect of institutions.

Second, since the definitions of institution refer to terms such as human activity, individual, and actor, they allow for the recognition of actors' power within the institutional process. This

can be viewed as a response to critiques of the initial emphasis on institutional isomorphism and conformity, which characterised the early stages of the new institutional theory.

In essence, the definitions of institution reveal a simplification of organisations' responses to environmental pressures. However, this perspective also overlooks the agentic power of actors and neglects the *symbolic aspects* that institutions possess, despite institutions having a dual nature encompassing both material and symbolic dimensions (Giddens, 1984). The overemphasis on the isomorphic aspect of institutions, primarily centred on their material dimension, presents institutions as passive entities merely reacting to external pressures (Barley and Tolbert, 1997). This narrows and neglects the focus of their active and symbolic dimensions, diminishing their role and significance within broader socio-cultural contexts. Consequently, this approach has drawn criticism for portraying institutions as passive subjects merely reacting to external pressures. For example, Friedland and Alford (1991) note that overfocusing on the material aspect of the institution has the potential to overshadow the inherent ability of individuals and organisations to actively engage in challenging and reshaping their behaviours within the confines of institutional contexts.

In response to these critiques, the later stage of new institutional theory started to emphasise the potential of individuals and organisations as actors in the definition of institution (Lawrence and Phillips, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). During the process, the concept of *institutional logic* has been developed within the theoretical boundary of new institutional theory in the 1990s. The concept of institutional logic highlights the dynamic nature of institutions by explaining how institutional logics change the interpretation of symbolic meaning and the acceptance of rules and how it shapes the institutional landscape more precisely (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999; Dunn and Jones, 2010; Thornton et al., 2012; Besharov and Smith, 2014).

To summarise, institutions are implicit patterns or naturally agreed-upon organised patterns of human behaviour that emerge over time from the entanglement of materials such as structure and practices and symbols such as ideation and meaning (Thornton et al., 2012). Although institutions may appear stagnant based on various scholarly definitions, they exhibit a dynamic nature as a result of the continuous evolution of society and the actions of individuals within it. Finally, a new concept known as institutional logic emerged to emphasise the significance of an actor's agentic power and the symbolic aspects of institutions. The subsequent section will explore the concept of institutional logic in detail.

2.3 Institutional Logic(s) and Collective Power of Individuals in Institutional Process: Institutional Entrepreneur vs Institutional Actor

This section delves into the concept of institutional logic and underscores the importance of acknowledging the collective power of individuals within institutional contexts. It highlights that the studies of institutional entrepreneurs do not fully encompass this aspect.

2.3.1 The Concept of Institutional Logic(s)

The concept of institutional logic(s) (hereafter, IL(s)) is defined as ‘the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activity, organise time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences’ (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804.). The terms such as construct and reproduce from the definition highlights the dynamic propensity institutions have. Additionally, it implies the initiatives of actor to participate in institutional process in both the material and symbolic aspects of institutions (Lawrence and Phillips, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012).

Moreover, the notion of IL is often expressed as *taken-for-granted-rules*. It can be everything that guides individual’s cognition and behaviour as the definition of IL resonate above. Therefore, scholars have widely accepted IL as a lens to answer a fundamental question of social science-how individuals and organisations create, maintain, and transform institutions through their actions (Child, 1972). Furthermore, the diverse range of actors (individuals and organisations) and the distinct rationalities inherent in each institution and their interactions have contributed to the widespread adoption of the notion of IL in organisational studies. Consequently, IL, as a metatheoretical framework, has enabled the examination of institutions at both micro and meso levels, encompassing individuals and organisations (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Importantly, this lens offers a comprehensive perspective on the interdependencies and interactions among institutions, organisations, and individuals within social systems (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

2.3.2 Collective Power of Individuals in Institutional Process: Institutional Entrepreneur vs Institutional Actor

Recognising the importance of the power that individuals and organisations have in institutional processes, DiMaggio (1988) introduced the notion of the *institutional entrepreneur*, further enriching the understanding of how individuals shape and navigate institutional contexts by challenging existing norms and practices.

According to DiMaggio's (1988) conceptualisation, an institutional entrepreneur refers to individuals or organisations that possess the ability and resources to articulate and advocate for institutional changes that align with their own self-interest. With this definition, individuals and organisations were often portrayed as *actors* (Levy and Scully, 2007; Garud et al., 2007; Battilana et al., 2009). In the studies of institutional entrepreneurs, the actors were seen as subjects who actively initiate and drive modifications to existing rules, norms, and practices within or outside the organisations (DiMaggio, 1988). In detail, the previous studies on institutional entrepreneurs delved into how institutional entrepreneurs leverage their influence and resources to challenge prevailing social or organisational structures in pursuit of change (DiMaggio, 1988; Levy and Scully, 2007). Notably, these actors are aware of the power dynamics around them and the available resources they can utilise before taking action to challenge or resist the status quo (Dorado, 2005).

However, this thesis questions whether previous research on institutional entrepreneurs adequately emphasises the *collective power of individuals*, as argued in institutional theory, where the concept of institutional entrepreneur emerged. Indeed, the majority of studies on institutional entrepreneurs have emphasised the *agentic power* that these individuals possess (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009; Pacheco et al., 2010). However, institutional theorists advocate for considering the collective power of individuals in the institutional process (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio, 1988; Thornton et al., 2012). From this perspective, this thesis contends that careful consideration is needed to distinguish between the agentic power of actors and their collective power in light of concerns that such definitional differences may indeed lead to diverse research foci.

In fact, the term agency is derived from agency theory and refers to an individual's or an organisation's ability to act independently and make choices that affect their own outcomes (Dorado, 2005). It emphasises the notion of individual or organisational autonomy and the ability to take deliberate action to achieve desired goals (Battilana, 2006). In contrast, the term *actor* within institutional contexts refers to individuals or groups situated who actively

participate in social interactions (Battilana et al., 2009). Therefore, in the context of ILs, actors are considered to be embedded within institutions and are influenced by the norms, values and practices that characterise those institutions (Johnson et al., 2000). To be specific, institutional actors are considered as social beings who both shape and are shaped by the institutions in which they operate in the context of ILs. The focus is more on understanding the social roles and positions of individuals and groups within institutions, as well as how they collectively contribute to the creation, maintenance, or transformation of institutions regardless of their intention to involve institutional process (Ghaffari et al., 2019). Similarly, IL highlights how actors are both influenced by and influential in shaping the institutions they are a part of. Individuals within institutions, as key components, interact in ways that maintain existing norms, beliefs and practices or drive transformative change. Consequently, the concept of actors within the IL framework recognises the substantial role that individuals and organisations assume in shaping both institutions and the broader society and their collective power for institutional changes (Hardy and Maguire, 2008; Battilana et al., 2009).

Given the varying definitional perspectives on agency and actor, this thesis questions the adequacy of current examinations of institutional entrepreneurs, given the differing definitional positioning between agency and actor, to encompass the aspect of individuals' power for institutional changes. Indeed, institutional theorists such as Hallett and Ventresca (2006), Powell and Colyvas (2008), and Battilana et al. (2009) have criticised the perspective of previous studies on institutional entrepreneurs, noting that they tend to overlook the collaborative efforts of various social actors within institutional frameworks, all of whom contribute to driving institutional change. In addition, the majority of research on institutional entrepreneurship has primarily focused on the role of organisations as institutional entrepreneurs, with little attention paid to the influence of individuals as institutional entrepreneurs (Beckert, 1999; Rao et al., 2000; Garud et al., 2007; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009).

2.3.3 Adoption of IL lens in Marketing Research

In the preceding section, it was discussed that while the perspective of institutional entrepreneurship highlights the capacity of individuals to drive institutional change, this thesis acknowledges the potential for collective power of individuals in the institutional process, justifying the integration of the IL lens into the research field of marketing. This idea is supported by the notion that 'individuals' behaviour is nested within an organisation'

argued by Friedland and Alford (1991). Additionally, Edelman's (1992) argument further propels the adoption of IL in this thesis. He argues that IL dynamics often motivate social actors to accelerate institutional inertia by elaborating on and developing existing IL. Considering these aspects collectively, this thesis contends that individuals, situated within society, often adopt a passive stance without inherently intending to initiate transformative institutional changes. Conversely, they may actively participate as intentional or proactive actors in driving such changes within institutions.

By integrating this perspective into the marketing literature, this thesis endeavours to introduce novelty by emphasising the role of consumers as actors within institutional groups, including virtual communities, corporations, or markets. This thesis highlights the dynamic interplay wherein consumers both exert influence and are simultaneously influenced by the prevailing norms, values, and practices within these groups. Adhering to the viewpoint of individuals as actors, this thesis aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between ILs and actors in shaping institutions.

Furthermore, this thesis identifies the potential for adopting an Institutional Logic (IL) lens in marketing research, drawing from existing studies that highlight the dominant dynamics among individuals and their tangible effects on business outcomes. For instance, within the marketing field, there is widespread recognition that consumer complaint behavior significantly influences corporate performance and can subsequently drive changes in market practices (Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Istanbuluoglu et al., 2017; Dolan et al., 2019). This recognition highlights the role of individuals as actors and their potential to influence and shape the norms and practices of institutions, demonstrating the potential for IL integration into the marketing domain. In fact, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) used the theoretical framework of institutional theory to explore the power of individuals in challenging dominant norms within the fashion industry. Although this is one of the few marketing studies that introduced IL, their work exemplifies the potential application of IL in understanding and analysing collective action of individuals and its impact on institutions in the marketing context.

Based on potential of the IL lens identified in this section, this thesis explores the influence of ILs dynamics on individuals' responses to existing logics in various institutional contexts. It seeks to investigate how ILs dynamics impact individuals' behavioural intentions, specifically, towards novel products. By demonstrating the effects of ILs dynamic on individual behavioural intentions, the research intends to reveal that ILs not only guide

individual behaviour but also provide evidence of individuals' collective behaviour having potential to affect institutional changes such as market. The findings of this thesis will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the bidirectional impacts between ILs and individuals/organisations (corporations in this research context), as well as shed light on the formation of ILs by actors within institutional context.

The next section will introduce the concept of institutional orders to discuss the overall structure of institutional systems in society and how they are organised and interconnected.

2.4 Institutional Orders

Multiple levels of institutions emerge and vanish within society as a result of the dynamic interplay between individuals and organisations in shaping ILs. To facilitate the classification of these numerous institutions as units of analysis, the concept of institutional orders was introduced. This section aims to provide an understanding the interconnectedness of two specific institutional orders, namely the community and the corporation, to gain insights into consumers' behavioural intentions in the context of novel product consumption.

2.4.1 Definition and Origin of Institutional Orders

Institutional orders are an analytical unit that allows us to understand how institutions operate in a social and cultural context, considering ILs such as the norms, values and beliefs that underpin them (Scott and Meyer, 2012). Because institutional orders distinguish institutions based on mutually exclusive ILs, it facilitates understanding of the different types of institutions existing within a society (Scott and Meyer, 2012). For example, institutional orders imply how institutions function differently and how the number of institutions legitimates their existence within society through the investigation of 'why do individuals within a certain institution act in such a way?' which is the long-standing enigma in social science.

Indeed, social scientists already have made many attempts to answer the question of how individuals as a group show somewhat unified cognition and behaviour (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Oyserman, 2009; White and Argo, 2009; Zourrig et al., 2015; Jin et al., 2020). Network theory, for example, describes how such networks constrain relationships between human and non-human actors and individual behaviours (Wellman, 1988). However, it failed to adequately clarify the reasons behind the interconnection among individuals or why power

and status do not universally yield the same outcomes (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Another good attempt, rational choice theory, contends that humans derive behavioural motivation from rationality after the self-interest calculation between cost and benefit (Gal and Rucker, 2018). Again, it still does not explain how and why individuals accept self-interest differently. For example, within a market setting, self-interest rationality prevails, driven by the pursuit of monetary benefits (Goya-Tocchetto and Payne, 2022). In contrast, for people who are in a professional group, rationality is obtained from factors such as personal reputation, professional associations, and the quality of one's skill (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 258).

On the other hand, the concept of institutional orders helps scholars in understanding how and why individuals and organisations accept the meaning of rationality, resource, and power differently depending on the social context, hence assisting in answering why individuals act in such a unified manner (Thornton et al., 2012). Under the IL assumption, that is, each institution operates with a distinct sense of rationality (Friedland and Alford, 1991), the concept of institutional orders has been introduced to capture and structure the distinctiveness of institutions existing in a societal context.

Institutional orders, a distinct typology of institutions that describes the inter-institutional system, are fundamental components of institutional systems in society and reflect distinct senses of rationality (Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). The distinct sense of rationality inherent in each institutional order serves as a unifying force that brings individuals and organisations together; as a powerful determinant in shaping their behaviour, resulting in the formation of an institution eventually (Marquis et al., 2011). The perspective of institutional orders posits that the meaning of rationality varies by where individuals are situated among the multiple inter-institutional systems (Powell and Bromley, 2015). Thus, individuals and organisations are influenced by existing ILs or influence ILs formation differently depending on how they accept institutional materials and symbols in their institutional setting.

Given the interest, scholars have sought to categorise the inter-institutional system into different institutional orders (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). For example, Friedland and Alford (1991) classified the key institutions into five groups based on the investigation of Western society: the capitalist market, bureaucratic state, democracy, nuclear family, and Christianity. Thornton (2004) amended Friedland and Alford's (1991) inter-institutional scheme to six institutional orders to the market, corporation, professions, state, family, and religions by adding corporation, suggesting that each of the institutional orders has weighted elements that give individuals a feeling of

rationality. For example, the institutional order of the market weighs the accumulation, codification, and pricing of human activity (Friedland and Alford, 1991, p. 249). Religion focuses on explaining the origin of the world and on converting all issues into expressions of absolute moral principles based on faith. The family leverages on converting social relations into reciprocal and unconditional obligations oriented to the reproduction of family members. The focus of the institutional order of the state is to convert diverse issues into consensus or majority vote. In short, each element becomes the principle of behaviours when individuals are within the institution. Importantly, Thornton et al. (2012) listed the community as another crucial institution very late since it was previously considered less modern and rational (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 23). Although all scholars have contributed to the development of institutional orders, the most recent work of Thornton et al. (2012) has been accepted as an ideal frame of the inter-institutional system classifying each nuclear IL in the seven institutions (Figure 7) as it accurately describes the current modern human society (Georgiou and Arenas, 2023).

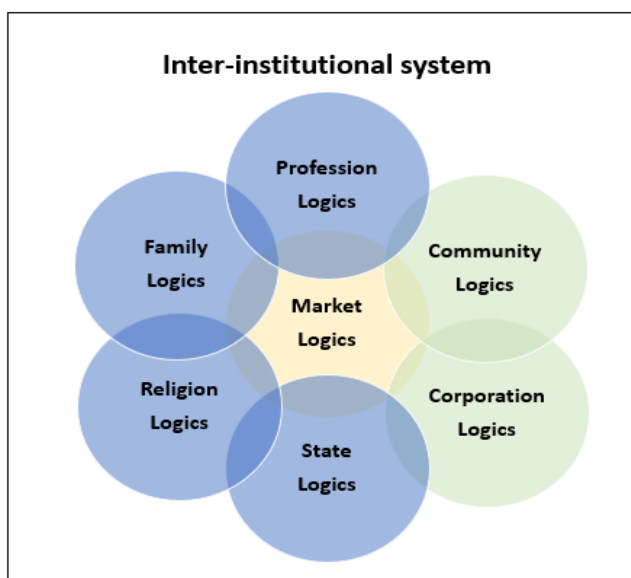


Figure 7 Visualisation of the Institutional Orders Proposed by Thornton et al. (2012) (Figure Made by Author)

It is noteworthy that there are overlaps between institutional orders, signifying that various institutional orders can indeed influence each other, as depicted in Figure 7 (Luo et al., 2010). Empirical research and case studies investigating whether institutional orders converge or diverge in terms of norms and practices provide evidence supporting this mutual influence. For instance, Xing et al. (2020) and Luo et al. (2010) examined the influence of ILs in government and market, which are part of the institutional orders, on the shaping of

corporation logics. In essence, the concept of institutional order facilitates researchers in exploring and understanding the complexities and dynamics of interrelationships among institutional orders, serving as a unit of analysis.

Meanwhile, institutional orders, the divisions of inter-institutional system, can be viewed as a random classification based on their isomorphic characteristics. However, they are grouped with careful consideration of cultural heterogeneity (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Each institutional order embodies both the symbolic and material aspects of the culture it represents. This is reinforced by the understanding that culture often externalises through institutional practices, sensemaking, vocabulary choice, action motivation, and even individuals' sense of self and identity (Redding, 2005). Moreover, culture shapes not only habitual action but also strategic decisions (Swidler, 1986). Hence, the typology of institutional orders emerges as a comprehensive framework that provides profound insight into why actors change their behaviour in different institutional contexts and why individuals within a particular institutional order exhibit somewhat unified behaviour (Friedland and Alford, 1991). To summarise, the concept of institutional order serves as an analytical framework for exploring the unique organisational principles, practices, and symbols that shape both individual and organisational behaviours while also acknowledging the potential for mutual influence among different institutional orders.

Since institutional orders operate as analytic tool, the majority of institutional studies have primarily focused on analysing the influence of institutional order on society changes. In particular, the impact of higher-level institutional orders on lower-level institutional orders, as well as the corresponding responses of lower institutional orders were investigated. In detail, previous research has explored how the behaviour of meso-level institutional orders, such as corporations, are shaped by the macro-level institutional orders, such as government (McGrath, 1997; Deng, 2009) and the market (Jamali et al., 2017; Thornton, 2002; Elg and Ghauri, 2021). The emphasis on higher level of institutions is primarily due to the relative ease of capturing the changes and dynamics of ILs by tracking the sequence of historical events that typically take place under the leadership of prominent institutional orders such as government and markets, a phenomenon known as historical contingency (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Fong et al. (2018), for example, demonstrated how, as the Macau government declared the liberalisation of the gaming industry and chose both gaming and tourism industries as the main economic pillars in Macau, multinational companies in the tourism industry modified their practices accordingly.

While the emphasis on the power dynamic of higher levels of institutional orders has broadened the scope of institutional research, it also limits the further expansion of institutional studies with following reasons. First, the scope of research subjects might be delimited to those evidently showcasing the reciprocal influence of institutional orders, with multinational enterprises (MNEs) emerging as the quintessential exemplar within this context. MNEs produce goods or services in at least two countries. Hence, they consider not only their home country's cultures, market norms, and government policies but also host countries' cultural and market norms as well as governmental pressure and incorporate them into their management strategy. This distinctive characteristic of MNEs prompts research to explore how external and macro factors surrounding them influence changes in their ILs, consequently impacting their management strategies. As a result, research conducted on MNEs predominantly concentrates on elucidating the causes of institutional changes, underscoring the importance of historical evidence, governmental policy changes, and cultural normative differences between home and host countries. These factors are relatively accessible and apparent, which may result in an undue concentration on a particular entity such as MNEs. This, in turn, could limit the understanding of how diverse organisations explore, respond to, and evolve their ILs (Saka-Helmhout et al., 2016; Newenham-Kahindi and Stevens, 2018; Röell et al., 2022).

Second, considering the nature of ILs within institutional orders, which entails a thorough comprehension of the norms, beliefs, and practices inherent within such orders, qualitative methods have predominantly been employed to elucidate their formation and the extant ILs (Pant and Ramachandran, 2017; Kyratsis et al., 2017; Grinevich et al., 2019). The constrained methodological approach restricts our understanding of the wide range of institutional processes and behaviours that exist beyond MNEs.

This thesis seeks to supplement the aforementioned limitations and broaden the scope of management and organisational studies and marketing research, which have adopted an institutional theoretical perspective by focusing on the relatively underexplored institutional orders of corporations and communities. Given the close interrelatedness of these two institutional orders, their interactions can have a significant impact on changes in consumer behaviour and market dynamics. Kotler (2000, p. 7) defined marketing as a discipline that centres on “a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others”, suggesting that the central and paramount subjects in the marketing domain are individual consumers, consumer communities, and the entities generating products and value, namely

corporations. Concisely, both individuals and the communities in which they live are stakeholders in the field of marketing. This underscores the importance of comprehending the interplay between corporations and consumer communities, which aligns with the research focus of this thesis. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the consumer communities, which are a micro-level institutional order, and corporations, which are meso-level institutional orders, among the seven institutional orders, and examines how ILs existing within each institutional order and their dynamics affect consumer behaviour in the context of novel product consumption.

The following sections provide a more in-depth understanding of the corporations and the virtual communities as institutional orders that followed distinct developmental paths and eventually evolved into separate institutional orders. In addition, their close relationship in terms of the impact on the market dynamic will be discussed.

2.4.2 Corporations as an Institutional Order

Before corporations emerged as an institutional order, the concept of corporations had already discussed and established as an institution through innovative changes in history, such as the collapse of feudalism and the emergence of natural rights in the 17th century (Shlapentokh and Woods, 2011). Amid these dynamic institutional changes in history, a notion of corporation emerged as a watershed concept that distinguishes pre-modern society from modern society (Scott, 2003). With the progression into the modern era, markets' distinct influences on society have been acknowledged over the past 50 years, and corporations have emerged as an institutional order, being recognised as a significant part of socio-economic transformation. Corporations assimilate capital, engage in contracts, and afford limited liability for shareholders (Williamson, 1975; Roy, 1997).

Acknowledging the importance of corporations within inter-institutional system, Thornton et al. (2012) proposed corporations as an institutional order. Table 2 shows various factors that justify the corporations as a distinct institutional order, such as their legitimacy, authority, identity, norms, attention, strategy, informal control mechanisms and economic systems, which distinguish their unique characteristics from other institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012).

Table 2 Corporations as an Institutional Order (adopted from Thornton et al., 2012, p. 73)

Categories	Corporation
Root Metaphor	Corporation as hierarchy
Sources of Legitimacy	Market position of firm
Sources of Authority	Board of directors, Top management
Sources of identity	Bureaucratic roles
Basis of Norms	Employment in firm
Basis of Attention	Status in hierarchy
Basis of Strategy	Increase size and diversification of firm
Informal Control Mechanisms	Organisation culture
Economic System	Managerial capitalism

The interpretation of each category in Table 2 is as follows. As an institutional order, corporations legitimise their existence in society through the market position of the firm (Thornton et al., 2012). The board of directors and top management have authority over the organisation, and bureaucratic roles determine its identity. Norms within the corporation revolve around employment in the firm, and attention is allocated based on status within the hierarchy (Thornton et al., 2012). The corporation's strategic focus centres on expanding the firm's size and diversification. Organisational culture serves as an informal control mechanism. In terms of the economic system, the corporation is associated with managerial capitalism (Thornton et al., 2012). A link to this concept can be made in the sense that corporations frequently emphasise their core values on economic advantage, and their existence is inextricably related to the market. This signifies that corporations, as one institutional order, and markets, another institutional order proposed by Thornton et al. (2012), can mutually exert influence on each other.

2.4.3 Communities as an Institutional Order

The concept of community as an institutional order was introduced relatively recently by Thornton et al. (2012). Community is an innovative extension of Friedland and Alford (1991)'s work on the six institutional orders. Before the community was proposed as an institutional order, the origin of a community was initiated by Tönnies (1957). In his work, the meaning of community was found in the German term *Gemeinschaft*, highlighting that a community has fundamental distinct differences from a society (*Gesellschaft*). It highlights that, in contrast to a society founded on transparency, anonymity, and universality, a community is founded on the interconnected relationships of individuals within geographical borders to which they belong (Tönnies, 1957). The distinctive features of the community result from the formation of a community in which members take care of interpersonal and collective relationships, as

well as the natural formation of a community within the boundaries of a specific area and local community among the members (Selznick, 1949; Zald, 1970; Scott, 2003). With such unique characteristics, the concept of community was introduced as an institutional order, emphasising its pivotal role in the formation of ILs and significant influence on institutional processes (Table 3).

Table 3 Communities as an Institutional Order (adopted from Thornton et al., 2012, p. 73)

Categories	Community
Root Metaphor	Common boundary
Sources of Legitimacy	Unity of will, belief in trust and reciprocity
Sources of Authority	Commitment to community values and ideology
Sources of identity	Emotional connection, ego-satisfaction and reputation
Basis of Norms	Group membership
Basis of Attention	Personal investment in group
Basis of Strategy	Increase status and honour of members and practices
Informal Control Mechanisms	Visibility of actions
Economic System	Cooperative capitalism

Table 3, which outlines the institutional order of a community by Thornton et al. (2012), underscores that the norm of the community originates from the group membership (basis of the norm) and the member with honour and higher status within the community helps to achieve the community's goal (basis of strategy in Table 3). In other words, the members with higher status and honour are the core of the community, leading the dominant ILs of the community, and this can be diffused between members who are tied up with the community membership. Moreover, members' visible actions help to shape the behaviours of the community (informal control mechanisms in Table 3), in turn, the trustful person's perspective has more influence on community members' initiative to act in the community. Finally, the reciprocal trust between members is the source of legitimacy that sustains communities as an institutional order.

Importantly, because communities operate within the framework of cooperative capitalism as their economic system (economic system in Table 3), they have an inherent relationship to the market. This implies that the fundamental values of communities also emphasise economic benefit, leading to their mutual influence on the market, similar to the institutional order of corporations. This can be traced back to the close interconnection between corporations and communities as institutional orders, which can mutually and collectively

influence the market within the inter-institutional system, as evidenced by previous studies (Luo et al., 2010; Xing et al., 2020).

The work of Schneiberg (2002) demonstrates how communities have a close relationship with the market. His study demonstrates the cooperative community-bound associations of insurance, dairy and grain industries competed with market governance, in the context of American capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The observation reveals how the geographically bounded community mobilised its own ILs. Additionally, the study showed how the diffused ILs within the community are drawn by actors, implying that actors within the geographically bounded community have the power to secure autonomous economic development by resisting the growing dominance of stock corporations (Schneiberg, 2002).

It is noteworthy that when the community was initially proposed as an institutional order, it was focused on its political, societal, and economic impact on society through distance proximity as can be inferred from the research of Schneiberg (2002). However, more organisational and management scholars began to recognise the influential role of communities in the inter-institutional context in shaping economic value systems and impacting business and society, regardless of the physical distance between members (Calton et al., 2013; Ocasio and Radoynovska, 2016; Hoi et al., 2018; Arena et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2020). Agreeing with this point of view, this thesis takes an additional stride and posits that the institutional order of a community should encompass the communities in the virtual environment, reflecting the reality of the times. Indeed, this perspective on the community compensates for the initial proposal of the community as an institutional order that emphasises the importance of geographical proximity in shaping community culture and identity, proposing that culture and identity can be developed and diffused even in online space, thus operating as institutional order within the inter-institutional system. The following section outlines the rationale with its connection to the context of this thesis.

2.4.4 Virtual Communities as an Institutional Order

This thesis proposes an alternative perspective on virtual communities, viewing them as an institutional order capable of shaping ILs that are distinct from other institutional orders through interactions among individuals. Before conceptualising the virtual community as an institutional order, this thesis endeavours to clearly define attributes of the community referred to in this thesis, providing a brief overview of the conceptualisation of communities

as an institutional order during their initial proposal and establish research boundaries of the community under investigation in this thesis.

In this thesis, the term "virtual community" refers to a community centred around consumption, formed through consumer-generated content and discussions related to market products. Positioned within the field of business research, this research contends that ILs emerging within the consumption-oriented virtual communities can wield substantial influence over consumer behaviour and various institutional dimensions. Building upon this rationale, this thesis suggests the conceptualisation of virtual communities as an institutional order, labelling the ILs that emerged within these communities as "virtual community logics" (hereafter, VCLs). The in-depth supporting rationales found in previous research are systematically explored in Section 2.4.4.1 and Section 2.4.4.2.

2.4.4.1 Initial Proposal of Communities as an Institutional Order and the Potential of Virtual Communities as an Institutional Order Found from Academic Evidence

When Tönnies (1957) introduced the concept of community, it was defined as centred on its unique aspect derived from geographical boundaries (Tönnies, 1957). Given power leveraged from the group membership among individuals based on physical proximity, in studies discussing community, emphasis was placed on its collective influence on specific industries, markets, and society (Tönnies, 1957; Rogoff, 2003; Norris et al., 2008; Cho and Blaser, 2012). Moreover, communities have often served as the study object in the institutional research area as they provide clues to how capitalist ideology facilitates individuals to form a community and how communities operate as institutional orders, implying their potential connection with business research (Okazaki, 2008; Harris and Rae, 2009; Van Der Schoor and Scholtens, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2020). However, this thesis suggests that research focusing on communities based on geographical proximity has not sufficiently illuminated the influence of communities in today's digitised environment.

Indeed, in the business research, an extensive exploration of the role of consumer communities, acknowledging the remarkable collective agentic power consumers possess (Erz and Heeris Christensen, 2018; Thompson et al., 2018; Sorum, 2020; Davey et al., 2023). In particular, as marketing environments become increasingly digitalised, researchers have gathered shared perspectives on the empowerment of consumers transcending temporal and spatial boundaries, driven by the digitalisation of marketing channels (Krush et al., 2015; Mačiulienė and Skaržauskienė, 2016; Hajli et al., 2017; Chapman and Dilmeri, 2022). These

explorations emphasise the impact on institutional changes as well, showcasing individuals' ability to collectively influence organisational behaviour, foster economic growth through consumption, and exert influence across inter-institutional systems (Wilson, 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Giesler and Veresiu, 2014; Dolbec and Fischer, 2015). For instance, as corporations enhance capital and labour productivity through the utilisation of digital channels, consumers improve the quality of their decision-making processes by leveraging the knowledge spillover effects arising from virtual communities (Zheng et al., 2024). Consequently, virtual communities exert an influence on a transnationally interconnected society through their collective actions, resembling the roles fulfilled by traditional, local-based communities (Djelic and Quack, 2003; O'Mahony and Ferraro, 2007).

Despite the impact of communities in virtual environments being conspicuous, institutional research has shown the limited exploration of virtual communities and their impacts on institutional processes (O'Mahony and Ferraro, 2007). Similarly, Marquis et al. (2011) further proposes that the concept of community as an institutional order should be redirected by expanding its dimension to virtual over the geographically bounded considering how its cultural condition generated within the community enables actors to embody community logics to collectively mobilise.

Therefore, this thesis proposes the importance of expanding the scope of community as an institutional order to include virtual environments. This thesis suggests that communities as an institutional order should be defined to incorporate virtual communities. This argument is built on the foundation that when communities were suggested as an institutional order, that is, geographically bounded, virtual communities still share fundamental characteristics with communities as an institutional order. The comparison between the elemental categories of Thornton et al. (2012)'s typology of the inter-institutional system, particularly focusing on the institutional order of the geographically bounded community (Table 3) and the virtual community, serves to validate the argument put forth in this thesis. In order to facilitate the readers' quick reference, Table 3 is repeatedly presented below, showcasing the outlined elements for reference.

Table 3. Institutional Order of Community (adopted from Thornton et al., 2012, p. 73)

Categories	Community
Root Metaphor	Common boundary
Sources of Legitimacy	Unity of will, belief in trust and reciprocity
Sources of Authority	Commitment to community values and ideology
Sources of identity	Emotional connection, ego-satisfaction and reputation
Basis of Norms	Group membership
Basis of Attention	Personal investment in group
Basis of Strategy	Increase status and honour of members and practices
Informal Control Mechanisms	Visibility of actions
Economic System	Cooperative capitalism

As evidenced in Table 3, communities as an institutional order are derived from the common interests shared among their members' visible actions through physical interactions. The cohesive force uniting individuals into a community becomes the source of the community's norm and makes it operate as an institutional order (Table 3). Similarly, virtual communities are also based on individuals' visible actions within the virtual environment, such as sharing information, experiences and sentiments related to their common interests, and this forms the community's norms and beliefs (Brodie et al., 2013). In turn, individuals' interaction within virtual communities also forms ILs similar to local-based communities.

Delving into each element in detail, similar to communities that are geographically bounded, virtual communities establish a shared space, albeit in a digital realm, where members interact and engage within common boundaries (Ren et al., 2012) (*root metaphor*). Such communities provide a digital space where members and non-members (i.e., bypassers) communicate and discuss products and services (Brodie et al., 2013). During the interaction, individuals sharing common interests show their will to unite and virtual communities gain legitimacy from there (Castelló et al., 2016). (*sources of legitimacy*). In addition, individuals build and evolve trust and reciprocity within virtual communities through active interactions, discussions, and the reciprocal exchange of ideas (Fang and Chiu, 2010) (*source of legitimacy*).

Crucially, individuals showcasing steadfast commitments to the community's values and ideology, mainly through substantial contributions to its development, endow the authority for virtual communities (Antikainen and Vaataja, 2010; Ren et al., 2012) (*source of authority*). Sometimes the commitments are often visualised through metrics such as the number of likes, subscribers, followers, and the member rank assigned based on their level of activity

(Kim et al., 2014), serving as sources of identity and basis of strategy for the virtual community simultaneously. These metrics showcase how members are emotionally connected, and satisfaction of personal ego, and engage in reputation-building (González-Anta et al., 2021) (*source of identity*), operating as *informal control mechanisms* as they often regulate members' behaviour to ensure compliance with established norms within communities (Kiesler et al., 2012) (*informal control mechanisms*). Moreover, Shih and Huang (2014) explained that one's social action within virtual communities shape their identity by aligning with desired group identities (*basis of attention*).

Finally, this thesis emphasises that virtual communities operate with a focus on cooperative capitalism as their *economic system*, resembling geographically bounded communities. In fact, members within virtual communities are committed to fostering economic growth and prosperity for all, engaging in collaborative efforts in the production (O'Hern and Rindfleisch, 2017) (e.g., co-creation), distribution (Armstrong and Hagel, 2009), and consumption of goods and services (Kozinets, 1999). The intentional or inadvertent collaboration facilitates the achievement of shared economic goals, enhancing the collective welfare of the community. A notable example is the practice of collective buying among virtual community members, where products and services are offered at significantly reduced prices through collaborative efforts (Lim, 2014).

To summarise, the discussion of this section accentuates the timeliness and relevance of extending the initially proposed institutional order of the community to virtual communities, grounded in prior literature in the business and marketing field. Through this discussion, this section validated the proposition of virtual communities as an institutional order by highlighting the ongoing applicability of the theoretical groundwork established when positing geographically based communities as institutional orders in institutional studies.

The next section further solidifies the proposition of the virtual community as an institutional order by illustrating consumer behaviour, elucidating how individuals within the virtual community shape ILs, specifically within the research framework of novel products outlined in this thesis.

2.4.4.2 Formation of VCLs and their Institutional Impact as an Institutional Order: In the Context of Novel Product Consumption

In this section, this thesis elucidates how ILs are formed within virtual communities in practice, aiming to demonstrate that such communities can operate as an institutional order. This will be illustrated using the context of novel product consumption, which is the research focus of this thesis. It begins with an explanation of the inherent inevitability for individuals to engage with virtual communities when they enter the context of consuming novel products. The evidence gleaned from their behavioural patterns will provide a deeper understanding of how they form norms and sentiments, which are elements of ILs, ultimately developing into VCLs.

2.4.4.2.1 The Implied Background of the VCLs Formation: Consumer Behaviour in Virtual Communities in the Context of Novel Product Consumption

This thesis regards individuals' engagement with virtual communities as inevitable, particularly in the context of consuming novel products. This assertion is supported by following rationales. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, individuals inherently possess a proclivity for seeking novelty. This inclination becomes particularly evident in the context of consumption, where their behavioural pattern actively involves seeking new knowledge about products, especially when those products are deemed novel (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Kozinets, 1999; Dholakia et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2017).

Throughout the process of acquiring product-related knowledge, the widespread presence of virtual communities further facilitates individuals' access, characterised by a low entrance barrier (Kozinets, 1999). Indeed, individuals perceive innovative products involves uncertainty regarding their anticipated outcomes (Rogers, 1983). To mitigate this discomfort, individuals often intensify communication, anticipating that interactions with others will facilitate a clearer understanding of such products (Burkhardt and Brass, 1990; Katz, 1980). Consequently, individuals participate in interactions within the virtual environment, facilitated by online channels such as virtual consumer communities, as they offer the flexibility to engage in such interactions without constraints of time and geography (Lim, 2014). In particular, in the case of novel products, information and understanding are scarce concerning these novel offerings in the market (Von Hippel, 1986). As a result, individuals with a significant interest in such products, commonly referred to as early adopters, tend to form virtual communities to share their interests and knowledge to pool collective knowledge (Lin et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, regardless of individuals' familiarity or enthusiasm for novel products, they also contribute feedback and ideas for product improvement based on the continuously evolving collective knowledge within these virtual communities (Dholakia et al., 2004). This can manifest in various forms, such as refraining from purchasing products, word-of-mouth interactions in the real world, or actively engaging in online discussions by commenting or liking posts (Ward and Lee, 2000).

Consequently, the socio-cognitive process occurring among individuals, irrespective of their level of engagement within a virtual community, is instrumental in creating and formulating a collective understanding concerning novel products. This thesis proposes that this process plays a central role in shaping a shared *norm* and *sentiment* among individuals, thereby serving as ILs that hold considerable influence over cognitive processes and behavioural tendencies.

The following section explains how norms and sentiments can be cultivated within virtual communities based on the individual's behavioural patterns of novel product consumption discussed in this section above. It will ultimately contribute to explaining how these two elements of ILs (i.e., norms and sentiments) converge and evolve, eventually forms VCLs.

2.4.4.2.2 VCLs Shaping around Novel Products through Norms Development within Virtual Communities

This section delves into the inherent connection between norms and ILs to propose how the norms cultivated within virtual communities can evolve into VCLs. Norms are rules or expectations subject to social enforcement (Etzioni, 2000). According to Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985), ILs serve as normative benchmarks for individuals, embodying collective beliefs and shared cognitions that steer consistent patterns of behaviour within a group. Building upon the research by Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985), this thesis recognises that norms within virtual communities emerge through interactions among individuals and influential figures, operating as integral components of VCLs. This facilitates the development of VCLs, as evidenced by studies on norm formation processes conducted by Ivaturi and Chua (2019).

Ivaturi and Chua (2019) propose two significant factors for norm formation. First, norms can arise through individuals' interpretations of events occurring during interactions with others. In essence, when individuals observe and comprehend discussions within a virtual community, and interpret the topic of discussion through interactions, it leads to the

development of norms associated with that topic. In fact, norms emerge within virtual communities as individuals strive to establish a consensus or project their own interpretations as the predominant viewpoint within the virtual community through their observable actions (Rovai, 2007). Supported by Thornton et al. (2012), the visible actions of individuals serve as informal control mechanisms, including norms, within the community. The dynamics that emerge from these interactions contribute to the community's function as an institutional order, fostering trust, reciprocity, and operating as a source of legitimacy for the virtual community, thus establishing ILs (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Building on this previous research, this thesis proposes that norms regarding novel products can emerge through interactions among individuals or members within virtual communities. These norms are expected to develop into VCLs for novel products, ultimately influencing individuals' behavioural intentions.

The second factor contributing to the norm formation process is the expectations set by leaders (Ivaturi and Chua, 2019). In virtual communities, leaders, often acknowledged as influential individuals through quantifiable metrics such as the number of likes or followers or their impact in a particular field by leveraging their knowledge or professional expertise, frequently play a leadership role (Arora et al., 2019). In fact, members of a virtual community are inclined to adhere to norms explicitly established or projected through the expectations suggested by community leaders (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002; Hsu et al., 2007; Kozinets et al., 2010). Supporting this with an institutional perspective, Thornton et al. (2012) emphasised that the basis of strategies for the community as an institutional order involves increasing the status and honour of members and the community's practices (refer to Table 3). Combining these insights, this thesis posits that VCLs are shaped by norms proposed by these leaders in virtual communities, reflecting the attributes of communities where the influence of community leaders on norm formation exists. Additionally, it is acknowledged that these aspects will be applied to the experimental stimuli (the details will be described in Chapter 4).

In summary, this section illustrated how ILs can emerge within virtual communities, eventually evolving into VCLs. It contended that norms, pivotal in the formation of ILs, can originate within virtual communities and transition into VCLs. Norms typically develop within virtual communities through interactions among individuals and influential figures. These perspectives align with institutional theorists' argument that there is a strong correlation between ILs and norms, with norms serving as a constituent of ILs (Friedland and Alford,

1991). The next section discusses another element of VCLs, sentiment, and how it can emerge within virtual communities, ultimately developing into VCLs.

2.4.4.2.3 VCLs Shaping around Novel Products through Sentiment Development within Virtual Communities

Sentiment, as articulated by Smith (1759), is the approval or disapproval of others' emotions, determined by the extent to which individuals can sympathise or fail to sympathise with those emotions. It involves the subjective evaluation of feelings based on the observer's capacity to understand and share in the emotional experiences of others. Similarly, as per Gordon (2017)'s definition, sentiment is characterised as "a socially constructed pattern of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organised around a relationship to a social object, usually another person.". In tandem, institutional theorists contend that sentiment, functioning as a reflection of collective emotions and attitudes, plays a pivotal role in shaping ILs (Haveman and Rao, 1997; Thornton, 2004; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). In other words, sentiment has the potential to steer the behaviour of both individuals and organisations within a specific institutional context (Zald and Ash, 1966; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013; Kearney and Liu, 2014). This perspective aligns with Hughes (1936, p. 186)'s assertion that "An institution must find a place in the standards of living of people, as well as in their sentiments," reinforcing the notion that sentiments are integral to institutional integration. This interconnected relationship is further illuminated by the study conducted by Haveman and Rao (1997), where they demonstrated that moral sentiment significantly influences the choice of organisational forms for savings and loan businesses.

Applying the logic outlined above and interpreting it within the institutional context emphasised in this thesis, namely virtual communities, within these communities, individuals can grasp the sentiment by observing the collection of reviews left by individuals in virtual communities which often comprise expressions with positive or negative emotional tones (Geetha et al., 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2017; Eslami and Ghasemaghaei, 2018; Nisar et al., 2019; Park, 2019; Park et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2020; Tata et al., 2020). These emotional expressions within virtual communities serve as reflections of user sentiments, offering insights into their opinions about products or experiences. In fact, Ibrahim et al. (2017) conducted sentiment analysis of consumer interactions on Twitter and revealed that consumer sentiment significantly impacts perceptions of products, services, and brand images. This study result emphasises that individuals within virtual communities can discern and interpret sentiment through ongoing social relationships by actively participating in or

observing patterns of emotions, gestures, and meanings within socially shared groups. Based on the theoretical evidence described above, this thesis contends that the sentiment surrounding novel products that emerges within virtual communities will play a pivotal role in shaping VCLs. These VCLs of novel products, developed through such sentiment, will influence individuals' behavioural intentions towards such products.

The following section will address how VCLs synchronicity influences consumer behaviour in the context of novel product consumption, particularly when consumers have subjective knowledge about such products. Building on this discussion, hypotheses will be formulated.

2.5 VCLs around Novel Products and Consumers' Subjective Knowledge

The previous section clarified the influence of the emergence of norms and sentiments within a virtual community on the formation of VCLs, thus establishing the virtual community's role as an institutional order. However, the discussion has yet to delve into how the direction of VCLs affect the behavioural intentions of individuals. Therefore, this section intends to investigate the correlation between consumers' subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products, particularly through VCLs. Special attention will be given to the directional synchronicity of VCLs, encompassing both positive and negative synchronicity. To facilitate this exploration, a deeper understanding of the relationship between subjective knowledge and VCLs with the characteristics of novel products will be explained. In addition, the concepts of cultural embeddedness and its relationship with VCLs will be delved into in this section. This will be explained by individuals' behavioural characteristics and theoretical rationale of the cultural embeddedness virtual communities have.

2.5.1 Cultural Embeddedness of VCLs and its Influence on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products

This thesis posits that ILs shaped within virtual communities will influence the connection between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. This assertion is based on the concept of embeddedness proposed by Granovetter (1985), with a specific focus on cultural embeddedness, which suggests that virtual communities inherently shape individuals' perspectives and behaviours.

Embeddedness is a critical construct that helps elucidate the essence of ILs. It argues that the elements comprising ILs, such as beliefs and norms, are deeply embedded within the ILs themselves (Granovetter, 1985). Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) expanded Granovetter (1985)'s work by proposing three types of embeddedness: (a) cognitive, (b) cultural, and (c) political. Among these three types of embeddedness, institutional scholars frequently used cultural embeddedness to explain the underlying foundations of ILs at the micro-level, namely the social nature of human behaviour (Klyver and Thornton, 2010; Laud et al., 2015; Wu and Pullman, 2015; Gregori et al., 2019).

Cultural embeddedness suggests that human actions and interactions consistently integrate the social and cultural context, encompassing the collective awareness of an individual's role in shaping their cognition and behaviour (Dequech, 2003). In essence, the micro-foundation of ILs, that is, cultural embeddedness, serves as a fundamental component within institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012). Thus, ILs actively contributes to shaping individuals' cognition and behaviour, as individuals acquire a nuanced understanding of the social and cultural context embedded within the ILs.

In particular, virtual communities are widely acknowledged to possess their own distinctive culture, leading to the development of a unique cultural identity (Wilbur, 2013). The culture of virtual communities is moulded by the collective set of beliefs, values, norms, customs, and practices embraced and adhered to by community members within the virtual space (Schembri and Latimer, 2016). Fundamentally, virtual communities possess a cultural embeddedness capable of influencing individual cognition and behaviour. This implies that the cultural and social context inherent in virtual communities serves as the micro-foundation of VCLs, thereby indicating that VCLs have a power to guide individuals' cognition and behaviour. This offers a more coherent explanation of how VCLs exert influence on individual cognition and behaviour within the cultural and social context embedded in virtual communities.

Especially, in the case of novel products, such products are often associated with the adoption of innovative technologies, typically lacking real-world user experience among potential consumers and may even be unfamiliar to the market itself (Von Hippel, 1986). Thus, individuals actively tend to engage in virtual communities where discussions and interactions regarding novel products are ongoing. During this process, they comprehend the cultural context embedded within these communities, leading to exposure to VCLs towards novel products. This exposure subsequently influences their cognition and behavioural

intentions when making decisions about novel products. Based on this rationale, the thesis argues that VCLs will inherently influence and shape individuals' perspectives and behavioural intentions towards novel products.

2.5.2 Subjective Knowledge and VCLs

As argued in the previous section, while VCLs have the potential to influence individuals' behavioural intentions, it is crucial to note that exposure to VCLs does not ensure an equal likelihood of individuals accessing all available information relevant to decision-making for the novel product consumption. Due to humans' limited ability to recognise ILs, capturing the nuances of VCLs necessitates retrieving information or awareness from their existing knowledge, namely, subjective knowledge. In fact, as per Wyer and Srull (1986) and Higgins (1996), human beings undergo a three-stage process of attentional allocation for ILs-(a) availability, (b) accessibility, and (c) activation-while emphasising its close relationship with the utilisation of knowledge within individuals. The subsequent content establishes the theoretical framework for hypothesis formulation regarding the relationship between VCLs and subjective knowledge, elucidated through the three-stage process of attentional allocation for ILs.

Availability refers to the knowledge and information that an individual can access for the cognitive process. Long-term memory contains information related to ILs that facilitate activities such as social sensemaking, problem-solving, decision-making and coordination (Wyer and Srull, 1986). In relation to the research context of this thesis, when individuals have subjective knowledge of novel products that are stored in their long-term memory, there is a possibility that knowledge about VCLs of novel products will be invoked for activities such as social sensemaking, problem-solving and decision-making related to novel product consumption. This suggests that individuals' subjective knowledge about novel products opens avenues for them to access VCLs discussing those novel products among the many other VCLs existing in virtual communities.

Moreover, an individual's awareness and information retrieval occur within both the cultural and situational context (Higgins, 1996). Higgins (1996) defines this phenomenon as *accessibility*. In other words, after the stage of availability, when individuals who are already aware of novel products and have the ability to retrieve information about them enter the stage of accessibility, namely, those with subjective knowledge about novel products, they are more facilitated in understanding the cultural and social context embedded within virtual

communities. Through this rationale, the thesis emphasises the close interplay between VCLs and consumers' subjective knowledge, highlighting their synergistic influence on their behavioural intentions towards consuming novel products.

At this juncture, this thesis highlights that the stages of attentional allocation of ILs (i.e., availability and accessibility) occur regardless of individuals' level of involvement in virtual communities. In other words, regardless of the level of their involvement in virtual communities, subjective knowledge allows individuals to access the cultural or social context of a virtual community, enabling them to grasp VCLs of novel products. This assertion finds support in Bargh et al.'s (1986) argument that an individual's extensive immersion within specific cultural contexts of virtual communities can significantly mould their accessibility to knowledge. This implies that individuals deeply engaged with virtual communities discussing novel products can enrich their subjective understanding of these products, simultaneously, subjective knowledge can facilitate a better grasp of VCLs for them. Simultaneously, Bargh et al. (1986) argue that the situational contexts also serve as a conduit between the situation and an individual's pre-existing knowledge, stimulating association formation. This indicates that even individuals who are not deeply engaged with the virtual communities can still comprehend and interpret the discussions within them by drawing on their subjective knowledge of novel products since the social context of virtual communities bridge the gap between their subjective knowledge and VCLs grasp. With this rationale, this thesis suggests that the diverse degrees of individuals' immersion within virtual communities, combined with their subjective understanding of novel products, collectively shapes their grasp of VCLs and their comprehension of the overarching cultural and social dynamics within these virtual realms.

Finally, *activation* denotes the culminating stage in the three-step process of attentional allocation for ILs. It entails the utilisation of accessible knowledge and information in social interactions (Higgins, 1996). As per Higgins (1996), activation is influenced by both individuals' knowledge accessibility and their attentional focus. This ultimate step prompts individuals to direct their attention towards specific ILs. This thesis concurs with this notion, as it has observed that individuals naturally progress through the activation stage due to their habitual tendencies as described in Section 2.4.4.2. Section 2.4.4.2 illustrated that individuals' engagement, whether active or passive, with other members regarding novel products within virtual communities, serves to enhance their focus on the interactions and discussions on such products, consequently guiding them into the activation stage. Examples of real online communities demonstrating interactions among individuals within

the communities regarding novel products (Figure 1, 2, and 3) further validate this point. This thesis elucidates the phenomenon wherein individuals tend to explore information intentionally or unintentionally regarding novel products due to their unique characteristics. These characteristics, including the limited accessibility of comprehensive information and the novelty of the products, diminish individuals' confidence required for making purchase decisions concerning novel products, despite their inclination towards novelty seeking, which is inherent in human nature and aids in problem-solving (Hales and Shams, 1991). Consequently, individuals seek knowledge and understanding about novel products to bolster their confidence in making purchase decisions (Acikgoz et al., 2023). Therefore, when individuals encounter virtual communities, it becomes essential for them to undergo the activation stage. In other words, the characteristics of virtual communities further encourage individuals to pay greater attention to VCLs. Furthermore, the activation of certain ILs depends on the applicability of accessible knowledge structures to relevant aspects of the situation and environment (Zucker, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). This further underscores the intimate connection between subjective knowledge and VCLs, highlighting that individuals possessing subjective knowledge about novel products are more inclined to pay greater attention to VCLs discussing those specific products. In other words, as individuals encounter VCLs, their subjective knowledge becomes more susceptible to the influence of VCLs. Simultaneously, subjective knowledge aids individuals in discerning and adopting specific orientations within VCLs (Ibraim et al., 2017). Thus, individuals' pre-existing subjective knowledge is not only influenced by exposure to accurate information but also shaped by how individuals perceive dominant perspectives or sentiments within the virtual community.

In summary, this section clarified that individuals are guided to comprehend specific VCLs about novel products within virtual communities, influenced by their subjective knowledge. Additionally, it emphasised that exposure to VCLs plays a role in further embodying subjective knowledge for individuals, potentially boosting their confidence in making purchase decisions for novel products as they acquire more knowledge while engaging in virtual communities. This underscores the close interconnection between subjective knowledge and VCLs.

2.6 Logic Synchronicity towards Novel Products: VCLs Synchronicity and CLs Synchronicity

This thesis endeavours to empirically establish whether diverse directions of logics formed within virtual communities and corporations possess the capability to influence the direction of consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. To address this objective, this section introduces a specific term logic synchronicity, recognising a prevailing ILs evident in a specific direction. Developed within the framework of this thesis, this construct shares similarities with certain constructs from previous institutional studies, but also possesses distinctive aspects, leading to the term coined in this thesis as logic synchronicity, deemed inevitable and most appropriate. This section provides detailed explanations and defines VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity within the research framework of this thesis.

2.6.1 Development of Definitions of VCL Synchronicity and CL Synchronicity

In the initial phases of institutional studies, prevailing research predominantly indicates that the decision-making processes of institutional actors align with ILs presented by higher-level institutional orders such as corporations, governments, and states (Cerny, 1995; Thornton, 2002; Lee, 2003; Thornton, 2004). This alignment resonates with the underlying assumption of ILs, which posits that institutions function across multiple levels and that individuals and organisations are nested within higher institutional orders (Kyratsis et al., 2017).

Consequently, these actors are characterised as subjects who are influenced by and conform to the ILs prescribed by the higher-level institutional order (Pache and Santos, 2013); thus, the term alignment was observed in the relevant institutional studies (Bacharach et al., 1996; Seo and Creed, 2002; Tina Dacin et al., 2002; Glynn and Abzug, 2002).

However, this thesis suggests that the term alignment is not suitable for describing the research context of this thesis considering its lexical definition and the purpose of its use in previous studies. *Alignment* is defined as “an arrangement in which two or more things are positioned in a straight line or parallel to each other” and “an agreement between a group of countries, political parties, or people who want to work together because of shared interests or aims” (Cambridge, n.d.). Essentially, the term alignment conveys the idea of a purposeful arrangement or agreement among various elements to function cohesively or harmoniously. Drawing from this foundational meaning, the concept of logic alignment was employed in prior research to describe organisational behaviour in which organisations intentionally adjust or align their goals, strategies, and structures with the prevailing logics at higher levels

of institutional orders to garner legitimacy (Thornton, 2002; Tina Dacin et al., 2002; Lee, 2003; Thornton, 2004; Kyratsis et al., 2017). Consequently, the term alignment emphasises a strategic and purposeful action of lower-level institutional orders towards ILs from the higher level of institutional orders.

On the other hand, the term *synchronicity* refers to “the happening by chance of two or more related or similar events at the same time.” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). It is also characterised as “the simultaneous occurrence of events, often without a discernible causal connection”. (*Oxford Dictionary*, n.d.). In psychology, synchronicity is conceptualised as “the occurrence of meaningful coincidences that seem to have no cause; that is, the coincidences are acausal.” (Piiro, 2011). In essence, the concept of synchronicity revolves around the idea that within diversity, there exists a sense of unity. This elucidates the occurrence of seemingly unrelated events or elements within virtual communities happening simultaneously, implying a meaningful connection without an apparent direct cause or purpose, which is the focus of this thesis.

Again, as elucidated in Section 2.4.4, this thesis conceptualises virtual communities as an institutional order, wherein ILs take shape through shared sentiments and cohesive norms developed through interactions among individuals. It explains that the logics that emerged within virtual communities are not the results of multiple logics reaching a deliberate consensus to develop a specific and dominant direction. Rather, VCLs closely correspond with the spontaneous emergence of similar behaviours, sentiments, or norms among community members. This occurs without a clear direction guided or directly influenced by external institutional pressures and emerges organically through the interactions among individuals within the communities. As these interactions unfold over time and individuals become exposed to this ongoing discourse within virtual communities, they gradually grasp the trajectory of discussions surrounding novel products within the community, and this becomes a certain direction of VCLs. In other words, interactions among individuals within virtual communities are natural occurrences devoid of deliberate arrangement but often manifest a predominant direction. In order to elucidate the context and purpose of this thesis aptly, the term “synchronicity” is employed, and this thesis defines VCLs synchronicity as identifiable patterns of logic consistently present in their approaches (specifically towards novel products within the context of this thesis) and argues that the term synchronicity better suits the context and purpose of this thesis.

In a parallel manner, corporations display a phenomenon referred to as *CLs synchronicity*, wherein recognisable patterns of logic consistently materialise in their approaches towards novel products. While the concept of *market homogeneity* exists within marketing literature and may appear analogous, it refers to a market characterised by uniformity in demand or consumer preferences, primarily employed to emphasise the market segmentation for management purposes (Grover and Srinivasan, 1987; Fornell, 1992; Çınar et al., 2020; McKercher, 2020). However, CLs synchronicity referred to in this thesis specifically targets the phenomenon characterised by a cohesive alignment in strategies, decision-making processes, and market orientations among corporations spanning various departments or hierarchical levels. The ensuing example of Apple aids in comprehending the meaning of CLs synchronicity that this thesis aims to elucidate.

Apple is a corporation that showed groundbreaking endeavours in the smartphone market laid a definitive pathway for the industry, establishing smartphones as a pivotal domain of innovation and consumer interest (Podolny and Hansen, 2020). As Apple's success became evident, other corporations within the technology sector discerned the lucrative potential of the smartphone market, prompting significant investments in research, development, and marketing efforts to secure competitiveness in the field (Appiah et al., 2019). This collective recognition of the smartphone's significance precipitated synchronised actions among competing firms, ultimately leading to the ingress of numerous corporations into smartphone production or its associated industries. This collective endorsement of the smartphone not only perpetuated its prominence but also contributed significantly to the evolution and maturation of the smartphone market as a whole (Gleiss et al., 2021).

In other words, the organic convergence towards synchronicity in CLs is often instigated by reputable and influential corporations possessing significant market influence derived from their adept resource utilisation. These industry leaders frequently establish the tone and direction for prevailing market trends, thereby exerting influence over the behaviours and strategies of other companies within the sector. Consequently, the actions and decisions of these influential entities wield substantial impact, resulting in shaping industry standards, consumer expectations, and the broader dynamics of the market. This phenomenon results in the widespread adoption of consistent logic among the majority of corporations towards novel product initiatives. CLs synchronicity represents the phenomenon described above, implying coherence in guiding corporate actions and responses to market trends or consumer demands. This thesis emphasises its natural occurrence rather than deliberate intervention, as suggested by the term synchronicity.

While this thesis does not delve into the individual factors contributing to VCLs and CLs synchronicity, the examples demonstrate how both exhibit a discernible and unified direction, suggesting the aptness of the term logic synchronicity in capturing this phenomenon that this thesis aims to explore.

2.6.2 Positive Logic Synchronicity and Negative Logic Synchronicity

Building upon the provided definition of logic synchronicity in Section 2.6.1, this thesis proposes that both virtual communities and corporations shape a certain direction of logics: (a) positive logic synchronicity and (b) negative logic synchronicity. Within virtual communities, members express diverse opinions about novel products, covering various aspects such as pricing, design, functionality, or services as described in Figure 1, 2, and 3. These individual expressions, whether direct or indirect about such products, collectively contribute to the formation of coherent norms, sentiments, or beliefs, creating a positive or negative thread that surrounds novel products in general (details are elucidated in Section 2.4.4.2.1 and 2.4.4.2.2).

When individuals encounter interactions within virtual communities and observe a collective emergence of positive sentiments, collaborative norms, and supportive attitudes among community members, whether through direct or indirect interactions, this is regarded as *positive VCL synchronicity*. Thus, this thesis views positive VCLs synchronicity will foster a unified and favourable environment, encouraging the consumption of novel products.

Conversely, *negative VCLs synchronicity* is characterised by the prevalence of adverse logic within the virtual community. In these instances, negative sentiments and collaborative norms work together to shape an unfavourable environment surrounding novel products. The expression of negative opinions and divisive attitudes by community members across various aspects contributes to the creation of an overall unfavourable atmosphere. As a result, the negative VCLs may exert a negative influence on not only members of virtual communities but also for individuals, fostering a discouraging atmosphere and potentially influencing their perceptions and decisions in a detrimental way regarding novel product consumption.

Similarly, *positive CLs synchronicity* pertains to the alignment of positive logic or strategic approaches across multiple companies towards a specific product or industry. For instance, positive CLs may emerge when competing companies collectively express optimism or enthusiasm towards novel products market opportunities, leading to collaborative efforts

and strategic alignments to capitalise on emerging trends or consumer demands for such products. This shared positivity fosters a conducive environment for industry-wide innovation, collaboration, and growth, ultimately benefiting the introduction and adoption of novel products across the market.

Conversely, *negative CLs synchronicity* arises when competing companies exhibit a prevalent adoption of adverse logic or pessimistic attitudes towards new market developments or product ventures. This could occur when companies express scepticism, reluctance to invest in new technologies, or resistance to industry changes. Such negative sentiments across multiple companies can hinder industry-wide innovation, collaboration, and progress, thereby impeding the successful introduction and adoption of novel products.

To summarise, this section defined positive and negative VCLs and CLs synchronicity. The next section will discuss the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity, and how these different directions of logic synchronicity will affect the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products.

2.7 Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products

This thesis posits a hypothesis that the synchronicity of VCLs can act as a moderator in the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions regarding novel products building on earlier discussions that underscore the significance of subjective knowledge and VCLs as facilitators in the consumption of novel products. The hypotheses are that the directions of VCLs synchronicity will be transmitted to how individuals will form their behavioural intentions towards novel product consumption. Specifically, it is hypothesised that individuals exposed to positive VCLs synchronicity within virtual communities will exhibit positive behavioural intentions towards novel products, and conversely, those encountering negative VCLs synchronicity will display negative behavioural intentions in relation to novel product consumption. The concept of compatibility further substantiates the hypotheses suggested in this thesis.

The lexical definition of *compatibility* denotes "a state in which two things are able to exist or occur together without problems or conflict" (*Oxford Language*, n.d.). In the realm of marketing research, the concept of compatibility has been refined, being articulated as "the

extent to which one product is similar enough to benefit from the same word of mouth or installed base effect as another product.” (Xie and Sirbu, 1995). In particular, in the context of innovation research, compatibility is conceptualised as “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, needs, and past experiences of potential adopters” (Moore and Benbasat, 1991, p. 195). Upon synthesising these viewpoints, the notion of compatibility suggests that consumers are more likely to show a pronounced preference for and adoption of innovative products that resonate with their current preferences, values, and experiences.

Within the framework of this thesis, the concept of VCLs synchronicity incorporates the idea of compatibility. It refers to the degree of alignment or harmony in the logics prevailing within a virtual community. It indicates the extent to which community members share similar perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs about a particular subject, such as novel products. Therefore, it signifies how well the product aligns with users' preferences and requirements, implying that compatibility, defined as the extent to which a product corresponds with the existing values, needs, and experiences of consumers in the context of product adoption (Moore and Benbasat, 1991).

Notably, subjective knowledge is associated with compatibility (Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010; Lin, 2011), as individuals with a better understanding of a product are more likely to perceive it as compatible with their needs and preferences (Helfat and Raubitschek, 2000; Moreau et al., 2001). Indeed, the affirmative association between consumers' subjective knowledge and compatibility, and their impact on the adoption of innovative products, is strongly substantiated by well-established theoretical models, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), the Motivational Model (Davis et al., 1992), and Social Cognitive Theory (Compeau and Higgins, 1995). In accordance with these theories, individual-level perceptions, such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norm, play a significant role in shaping individuals' perception of the adoption of technologically advanced or innovative products as being more convenient and feasible. Significantly, these factors assume crucial roles in moulding one's subjective knowledge (Monroe, 1976; Gregan-Paxton and John, 1997). Indeed, Kim and Ammeter (2011) found that in situations where compatibility is high, pre-existing knowledge becomes highly transferable for the adoption of innovations, thereby alleviating the negative impact associated with the complexity inherent in novel products. In essence, subjective knowledge acts as a catalyst, enhancing compatibility (Moreau et al., 2001), while compatibility also stimulates

individuals' subjective knowledge, leading them to perceive the adoption of novel products as more convenient and feasible (Nowlis and Simonson 1997).

In summary, the heightened level of compatibility of novel products, as indicated by VCLs synchronicity, interacts with consumers' subjective knowledge, thereby enhancing the perception of ease in accepting novel products (Gatignon and Robertson, 1985; Mahajan, Muller and Bass, 1995; Moreau, Markman and Lehmann, 2001; Sheth, 1981). This, in turn, influences consumers to make decisions to align with firmly established preferences and experiences about novel products within virtual communities, that is, the dominant direction of VCLs synchronicity. Consequently, when individuals with subjective knowledge encounter positive VCLs synchronicity, they are more likely to perceive such products positively, leading to increased adoption rates or reluctance. Conversely, when individuals with subjective knowledge are exposed to negative VCLs synchronicity, they interpret it as an indication of compatibility of novel products, shaping their behavioural intentions towards these products negatively.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that consumers' subjective knowledge interacts with the compatibility indicated by positive or negative VCLs synchronicity. Thus, VCLs synchronicity amplifies the relationships between subjective knowledge and consumer behavioural intentions towards novel products, with the direction of behavioural intention aligning with the direction of VCLs synchronicity. Building on this rationale, several hypotheses can be postulated as follows.

H2a. The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the purchase intentions of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

H2b. The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the product evaluation of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

H2c. The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the adoption procrastination of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will decrease (increase) adoption procrastination.

The following section will construct hypotheses regarding VCLs conflict, building on the understanding gained from the discussion of the correlation between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity in this section. Prior to delving into an exploration of the VCLs

conflict and their influence on consumers' behavioural intentions, the concept of conflict, which is variably developed across different disciplines, will be addressed. This preliminary discussion aims to provide a contextual framework by elucidating the multifaceted viewpoints and theoretical constructs relevant to conflict within various domains such as management and organisational studies, marketing research and institutional studies. Through this comprehensive analysis, gaps in the existing literature will be identified, ultimately helping in establishing a comprehensive foundation for analysing the role of ILs conflict within the marketing context and its implications for consumer behaviour.

2.8 The Concept of Conflict in Management and Organisational Research, Marketing Research, and Institutional Research

This thesis seeks to explore the situations of where ILs conflict exists within an institutional order (i.e., virtual communities) and between two institutional orders (i.e., virtual communities and corporations). To achieve this aim, this section aims to enhance the understanding of conflict mechanisms by examining how conflict has been conceptualised in marketing research, with its positive and negative effects. Additionally, institutional research has explored ILs conflict, which emerges from divergent ILs and can result in organisational change and tension. The upcoming section explores the different views on conflict in marketing research and institutional research, highlighting the significance of using an IL lens to gain a better understanding of how consumers behave when faced with conflicts in consumption within virtual environment.

2.8.1 The Concept of Conflict in Marketing Literature and Consumption Behaviour

The concept of conflict has traditionally been considered and categorised within the marketing domain into two broad groups based on different study objects that are essential for business management. These groups are delineated and elaborated upon in the following explanations.

2.8.1.1 External Conflict in Marketing Research

The first category revolves around conflicts related to business resources (i.e., stakeholders) such as marketing managers (Song et al., 2000), channel partners (Webb, 2002), suppliers (Yang et al., 2017) and customers (Vitell et al., 2000). Conflicts stemming from stakeholders, referred to as external conflict in this thesis, constitute a significant aspect closely

interwoven with marketing performance and business management, thus garnering substantial research attention (Vitell et al., 2000; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001; De Madariaga and Valor, 2007; Roloff, 2008; Matos and Silvestre, 2013; Pless et al., 2021; Kruczek et al., 2022). For instance, Maignan and Ferrell (2004) concentrated on conflicts emanating from eco-conscious consumer communities directed towards corporations. Their study illustrated that these conflicts pose challenges to a corporation's sustainability strategy and performance, as they advocate for greater environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. This suggests that external conflicts arise from interactions between corporations and external stakeholders with diverse expectations, values, or interests, directly impacting management performance and contributing to the overall organisational dynamics.

As the field of business and management studies increasingly accentuates external conflicts, marketing researchers have similarly directed their efforts towards exploring the antecedents and outcomes of such conflicts within the marketing domain. This shift in emphasis is justified by the intimate correlation between the efficacy of marketing endeavours and the fundamental principles of business management. Notably, marketing researchers have extensively examined various elements influencing external conflicts, including communication styles, leadership styles, organisational culture, power dynamics, and structural factors (Weitz and Bradford, 1999; Homburg et al., 2000; Olson et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2020). Similar to organisational studies, marketing research perceives conflict as a potential interfere for enhancing business performance, thereby advocating for the effective addressing and resolution of such conflicts. This involves establishing efficient communication channels (Gregory, 2007) or fostering collaboration (Freeman et al., 2007).

2.8.1.2 Internal Conflict in Marketing Research

The second category of conflict in marketing literature pertains to conflicts related to consumers themselves, referred to as internal conflicts within this thesis. These conflicts manifest within an individual and are characterised by their personal nature. The primary focus of this type of conflict is predominantly due to a mismatch between product attributes and consumers' cognitive framework, such as their attitudes, values, beliefs, perceptions, and motivations throughout their consumption journey (Smith and Colgate, 2007; Guenzi and Troilo, 2007; Haws et al., 2014; Tu et al., 2022). For example, Markauskaitė and Rūteliūnė (2022) noted a consumer conflict emerges due to the mismatch between their materialistic values and green values during decision-making processes. Levav et al. (2010) also observed that consumer conflict occurs when multiple attributes align with their goals.

In common, the existing literature on this type of conflict studies in marketing has been significant in that it perceives conflict as a negative consumption-oriented construct, resulting in outcomes such as delays in making product choices (So et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2020; Zollo, 2021). Consequently, effective management of these conflicts is underscored as essential to enhance the overall consumer experience, supported by Anderson and Weitz (1992), who contend that conflict has a detrimental impact on customers' trust and commitment to product sellers. In addition, in order to explain this type of conflict, the lens of two prominent theories has been predominantly explored: (a) cognitive dissonance theory (Wilkins et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2021; Barta et al., 2023) and (b) regulatory focus theory (Hirsh et al., 2012; Kareklas et al., 2016; Luqman et al., 2021).

First, Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory initiates from the hypothesis that individuals strive for consistency in their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. According to his theory, consumers experience cognitive dissonance, a state of psychological discomfort, when faced with a discrepancy between their values and the attributes of a chosen product. Individuals may engage in various cognitive processes to alleviate this discomfort, such as re-evaluating their values, justifying their decision, or seeking information to reduce the dissonance.

Second, regulatory focus theory, proposed by Higgins (1997), centres on elucidating how individuals engage in self-regulation. This theory expounds on the mechanisms of conflict by delineating the process of aligning oneself with one's standards and goals, utilising two distinct motivational orientations: (a) promotion focus and (b) prevention focus. According to this theory, promotion-focused consumers are primarily concerned with pursuing gains, accomplishments, and aspiration. Conversely, prevention-focused consumers prioritise avoiding losses, fulfilling obligations, and maintaining safety. In the context of consumption, individual's value and goal can be considered a prevention attribute as it serves as a means to avoid negative utility. Conversely, product attributes can be seen as promotion attributes because they act as a means to achieve positive utility. Under this theoretical perspective of self-regulation, conflict arises due to the attribute trade-offs between the means to achieve a particular goal.

Comprehensively, these two theories have made significant contributions to understanding the fundamental psychological processes related to conflicts caused by inconsistencies in consumer values and product attributes, which is consistent with the view on conflict in marketing research that conflicts arise due to contradictory needs and goals related to

individual consumption in the consumption process (Husemann and Luedicke, 2013; Chalmers Thomas et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2019).

2.8.1.3 Positioning Conflict within the Thesis Research Framework

While researchers have made strides in understanding how consumers manage conflicts in their behaviour through insights into cognitive dissonance and regulatory focus mechanisms, this thesis reveals a significant limitation in addressing its research questions within the two theories commonly applied in marketing literature. Specifically, these theories often presume individuals to be predominantly rational decision-makers. For example, regulatory focus theory emphasises the influence of regulatory orientations on individuals' decision-making processes and goal-pursuit strategies (Higgins, 1997). The assumption of this theory is that individuals assess available options rationally and choose those that align with their regulatory orientation to maximise positive outcomes or minimise adverse outcomes. Similarly, cognitive dissonance theory recognises that individuals may reduce cognitive dissonance by self-justification and rationalisation (Festinger, 1957). Although this theory does not deny that consumers often employ rationality to maximise their utility or satisfaction by meticulously evaluating the costs and benefits of various alternatives (Dhebar, 1994), it still assumes some level of rationality in their thought processes.

However, the rational choice theory has faced frequent criticism. Critics argue that this theory relies on simplified and unrealistic assumptions about human decision-making, such as perfect rationality, complete information, and self-interest as the sole motivator (Satz and Ferejohn, 1994; Pettit, 2000; Grüne-Yanoff, 2007; Steele, 2014). It has been argued that these assumptions do not align with observed human behaviour, which is influenced by factors such as emotions, social norms, cognitive limitations, and contextual factors (Macy and Flache, 1995). Particularly, when considering individual behaviour in a group context, it becomes evident that individuals are not solely rational decision-makers (Oyserman, 2009).

Highlighting the unique psychological mechanisms and behavioural manifestations of individuals within and outside of a group context (Riketta, 2005; Zourrig et al., 2015; Lin and Bruning, 2020), conflict studies have taken into account the group context focusing on individuals' structural embeddedness. They propose mechanisms outlined in social identity theory (Johar, 2005; Shavitt et al., 2009; Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2023) and social conformity theory to elucidate their participation in collective action (Ashworth et al., 2005; Torelli, 2006; Chan et al., 2012).

Social identity theory posits that individuals are attracted to groups and identities that have positive qualities such as competence or morality, as well as clear and distinct group norms (Tajfel et al., 1971). By aiming to join such groups, individuals try to have a positive collective self-concept. This is considered as cognitive incentives, as a result of which they demonstrate their willingness to cooperate to the collective actions of a group especially when they are situated in competitive situations between two distinct groups, namely intergroup conflict (Lewin, 1948; Sherif, 1966; Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Social conformity theory argues that individuals' behaviour is influenced by others regardless of group membership because they act based on expectations of incentives to receive after the identical behaviour of others, which leads a collective action. Researchers have used the group conflict and social conformity theories to understand their implications for consumer decision-making by demonstrating how group conflict and social conformity influence consumers' choices, such as brand loyalty and product adoption (Ashworth et al., 2005; Torelli, 2006; Chan et al., 2012). These studies have examined how individuals conform to the norms and preferences of their social groups to reduce conflict and maintain a sense of belonging. Scholars have investigated the impact of social conformity on consumer responses to marketing messages and advertisements, exploring how individuals align their opinions and behaviours with those of their reference groups when evaluating and responding to persuasive communication (Goldstein et al., 2008; Gupta and Ogden, 2009).

This line of research demonstrates the influence of social conformity on consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and intentions to make purchases to avoid conflict. However, because it overemphasises the role of the individual within the group context, this theoretical perspective fails to explain instances where individuals exhibit independent behaviour that deviates from collective action. In addition, while social conformity theory acknowledges the influence of collective actions on individuals, it posits that individuals do not conform to the behaviour of everyone indiscriminately. Instead, before making a decision, individuals engage in a rational calculation of the potential benefits they stand to gain from participating in collective action. This even implies that these theories still consider individuals as rational decision-makers who weigh the costs and benefits before choosing whether to conform or deviate from collective behaviour.

In contrast to conflict in marketing research, which used social identity theory and social conformity theory to explain consumer behaviour in group conflict, this thesis recognises that individuals have rationality but only within the bounds of bounded rationality, implying

that their rational decision-making is constrained by cognitive limitations and information availability. This perspective is in line with that of institutional theorists, who consider individuals as bounded rational actors (Martinez and Dacin, 1999). Bounded rationality emphasises that individuals do not possess perfect information and instead search for satisfactory solutions, given the limitations of their cognitive abilities and the complexity of their environments (Dequech, 2001). According to Powell and DiMaggio (1991), the environments in which individuals interact are murky, implying that individuals cannot fully comprehend or analyse in a precise manner. As a result, rather than attempting to fully analyse and understand their surroundings, individuals rely on interpretation to make sense of them. In this regard, ILs facilitates individuals in this interpretive process by providing frameworks and guiding principles that shape their understanding and actions within specific institutional contexts.

The conventional understanding of consumer conflict behaviour attributed to social conformity and group identity may have limited explanatory power in the specific context of this thesis, as this research centres on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products within virtual communities comprising both highly engaged and less engaged members. In other words, this thesis does not revolve around predicting individuals' behavioural intentions based on their sense of belonging to groups. The focus of this thesis is on investigating how individuals assimilate perspectives associated with larger societal or institutional contexts, to guide their behavioural intentions. Therefore, this thesis contends that ILs offer a more suitable framework for understanding how consumers' behavioural intentions are influenced beyond mere consideration of tangible benefits or rational choices rather than relying on the established concepts of conflict through social conformity and social identity theories in marketing research. Indeed, institutional theorists have shown interest in understanding conflicts among multiple ILs and its impact on individuals and organisational behaviour. The forthcoming section will delve into the concept of ILs conflict and its implications for this research. It will elucidate how ILs conflict guides and shapes individuals' decision-making processes, even amidst conflict, whether among individuals or between groups, which is the central focus of this thesis.

In summary, this section discussed the development of the concept of conflict, distinguishing between external and internal conflicts. Internal conflicts were further classified as those that occur within individuals and those that occur within individuals but in a group context. Furthermore, a theoretical gap was identified in this section, especially in terms of how previous studies viewed individuals, which did not align with the perspective of

this thesis. Previous research often portrayed individuals as rational decision-makers, whereas the IL lens recognises individuals as bounded rational actors. Recognising the power of the assumption of ILs in addressing the identified theoretical gap, the following section will shift the focus to conflict studies within the virtual environment, particularly within virtual communities, which is consistent with the research context of this thesis.

The subsequent section begins with an elucidation of a unique form of conflict referred to as IL conflict, which emerges from the domain of institutional research and diverges from the conflicts explored in management and organisational studies and marketing research. The benefits of adopting the IL lens will be further highlighted in bridging the existing gaps identified in conflict studies within the marketing literature, particularly within the realm of virtual consumption environments focusing on novel product consumption, through an exploration of IL conflict, specifically how and why it occurs.

2.8.2 The Concept of ILs Conflict in Institutional Research: Inter-institutional and Intra-institutional Conflict

ILs, encompassing a spectrum of assumptions, norms, values, beliefs, practices, and rules, undergo continuous evolution over time (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Consequently, within the process of change, multiple ILs coexist within a single institutional order. Moreover, due to the interdependence of institutions within an inter-institutional system, overlaps and divergences of ILs are inevitable between institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012).

However, individuals and organisations are embedded, nested, and interconnected within social networks and when they make choices, their cognition and behaviour are influenced by dominant ILs where they are laid. ILs give individuals' and organisations' decision-making significance, moulding their goals and attitudes, which are internalised as implicit rules (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Thus, upon recognising certain ILs as predominant, individuals or organisations perceive all associated assumptions, norms, values, beliefs, practices, and rules guided by such ILs as acceptable, desirable, proper, or appropriate, thereby conferring legitimacy upon them (Suchman, 1995). Consequently, conflict arises when individuals and organisations encounter clashes between ILs or when ILs contradict their own, as they find it challenging to deviate from the existing ILs, given their perceived legitimacy. In particular, conflict arises when there are disparities between the current ILs and ILs that challenge the current ILs, as well as between ILs across different institutional orders when they adhere to their own core logic. These conflicts, known as *ILs conflict*, are characterised by clashes

between the underlying ILs within each institutional order. ILs conflict occurs at different levels of institutional orders: (a) within an institutional order (intra-institutional conflicts) and (b) between institutional orders (inter-institutional conflicts).

Intra-institutional conflict emerges when incompatible prescriptions from multiple ILs coexist within an institutional order (Greenwood et al., 2011). Another circumstance that gives rise to intra-institutional conflicts is when institutional entrepreneurs take action within an institutional order by drawing upon, interpreting, and enacting different ILs (Dorado, 2005). When an organisation strongly adheres to its central ILs, but institutional entrepreneurs recognise the incompatibility between the demands imposed on goals and feel threatened by institutional support, alleviating this tension becomes challenging, resulting in IL conflict (Pache and Santos, 2010).

Conversely, *inter-institutional conflicts* arise as a result of the interdependence of institutional orders. Although the notion of institutional order aids in dissecting the institutions within an inter-institutional system for analysis by delineating their distinct features, it is important to note that each institutional order is not entirely independent of other institutional orders, as contradictory interests coexist between the institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012).

While resisting changes in ILs and replacing existing ones with new ones has been commonly regarded as an inevitable occurrence in institutional studies (Pache and Santos, 2013), the conflict between logics is often perceived as a threat to organisational survival. Therefore, scholars in the field of institutional research and organisational studies have made significant efforts to explore conflicts arising from the interplay of divergent ILs (Seo and Creed, 2002; Thornton, 2002; Pache and Santos, 2010; Besharov and Smith, 2014; Fathallah et al., 2020). In detail, the ILs conflict exerts pressure on organisational change by shaping the attention of decision-makers within organisations (Ocasio, 1997). This is because incompatible ILs originating from different institutional orders pose a threat to the identity and legitimacy of one or more institutional orders. As a result, the institutional orders are forced to compete in a competitive situation known as an inter-institutional conflict. Organisational change may be viewed as an element that facilitates societal development from a broader societal perspective (Tjosvold, 1998); however, from the standpoint of individual organisations, such changes can be perceived as threatening because they may need to deviate from their established strategies or structures to accommodate ILs that gained the upper hand after the conflict (Thornton, 2002; Bitektine and Song, 2023).

To summarise, this section offered a comprehensive overview of how conflict is approached within institutional research, introducing the concept of IL conflicts. Based on the understanding, this thesis believes, by taking the perspective of ILs conflict which emerged within the lens of ILs, it can effectively address the potential of ILs in predicting consumers' consumption behavioural intentions in conflict situations. In particular, this thesis has a curiosity how consumers will show their behavioural intentions towards novel products when they face conflict among members within virtual communities (VCLs conflicts) and between virtual communities and corporations (Conflict between VCLs and CLs). Indeed, Chapter 1 discussed how, due to fewer established and prevalent norms for novel products, individuals often construct and shape the ILs of novel products as they interact within virtual environments. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 1, it was explained that different individuals exhibit divergent ideas on novel products during interactions in virtual environments, resulting in logic conflicts for the novel products. Indeed, when there is a weak tie and interdependence among members of virtual communities, there is a greater scope for deviations from one dominant and prominent ILs within the institutional order, leading to disruptions in group cohesion and the occurrence of conflicting ILs (McPherson and Sauder, 2013). Virtual communities rely on digital communication, thus lacking the personal connection compared to physical communities, resulting in weaker ties among members. Therefore, virtual communities, in contrast to physical communities, where face-to-face interactions and shared physical spaces foster stronger social bonds, logic conflict may occur prominently. Consequently, individuals who frequently seek information about novel products within virtual environments may encounter this conflict more readily.

Despite the frequent consumption situations or environments experienced by individuals- such as logic conflicts for the products emerged from influential institutional orders for their decision-making (i.e., virtual communities and corporations)-it remains unclear how individuals will react to ILs conflict in consumption contexts. Therefore, this thesis seeks to explain this with the concept of ILs conflict in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the influence of ILs on individual decision-making and actions. By examining the impact of logic conflicts manifesting at both intra-institutional (i.e., conflict within virtual communities) and inter-institutional levels (conflict between virtual communities and corporations) on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products, considering the impact of consumers' subjective knowledge, this thesis will ultimately assist marketers in predicting consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

The upcoming section will explore the correlation between consumers' subjective knowledge and VCLs conflict, alongside the impact of VCLs conflict on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products, taking into account the unique characteristics of these products.

2.9 VCLs Conflict around Novel Products and Consumers' Subjective Knowledge: Moderation Effect of VCLs Conflict

This thesis elucidates the influence of VCLs conflict on consumers' behavioural intentions concerning VCLs conflict, presenting a fresh outlook on logic conflict divergent from the conventional perspective of institutional theorists. Rather than regarding conflict as a challenge for organisations to manage, this thesis suggests that conflict may exert a positive impact on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products, particularly when logic conflicts are encountered in virtual environments. This assertion is substantiated by persuasive arguments theory, highlighting its potential correlation with consumers' subjective knowledge.

Persuasive arguments theory underscores the substantial impact of VCLs on individuals' cognition formation, irrespective of their level of engagement in virtual communities. According to this theory, decision outcomes can be somewhat predicted based on the cognitive arguments generated by individuals before participating in group discussions (Lamm and Myers, 1978). In essence, while persuasive arguments presented during a group discussion may influence individuals' attitudes and beliefs, their ultimate decision-making can still be influenced by various factors, including their initial cognitive biases (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). This theory explains that the outcome of the discussion is viewed as a potential medium for information exchange rather than a crucial determinant in shaping individuals' actions (Meyers, 1989).

In the earlier Section 2.1.2.4, it was established that subjective knowledge operates as a mitigator of perceived familiarity deficiency for novel products. Thus, it helps individuals enhance their positive view of novel products, influenced by their inherent novelty-seeking nature, perceiving the innovativeness of novel products as an indicator of advanced products (Saridakis et al., 2019). This suggests that individuals with subjective knowledge of novel products have already somewhat formed positive cognitions towards such products. In fact, confirmation bias occurs when individuals have a certain understanding of a particular direction but encounter opposing viewpoints (Athota et al., 2023). In such situations,

confirmation bias emerges as individuals actively seek positive reviews or information that aligns with their beliefs, while disregarding or dismissing contradictory reviews or information (Mercier and Sperber, 2017). This supports the hypothesis developed in this section that individuals with subjective knowledge may tend to find positive logics about novel products among the divergent logic towards novel products.

Furthermore, according to Mercier and Sperber (2017), this bias hinders the development of well-grounded beliefs, diminishes individuals' ability to correct their misconceptions and leads to overconfidence when engaging in independent reasoning. This selective approach to processing information reinforces their subjective knowledge and manifests the presence of confirmation bias, which gives them more confidence in their decision-making (Vaidyanathan et al., 2018). As a result, despite the presence of mixed positive and negative VCLs regarding novel products, individuals with subjective knowledge may adhere to the positive logics towards these products and reflect it for their behavioural intentions. Moreover, the absence of physical proximity in virtual communities results in weaker interpersonal connections among members, enabling individuals to make autonomous decisions that may diverge from collective group actions, even if they encounter negative logics among the mixture of positive and negative logics within the virtual communities (Gibbs et al., 2019). This thesis assumes that such autonomous decisions are introduced by positive confirmation derived from their subjective knowledge. Based on the discussions above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3. The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs conflict, such that VCLs conflict will lead to positive outcomes.

The next section will formulate hypotheses about the impact of VCLs and CLs (synchronicity and conflict) between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions toward novel products.

2.10 VCLs and CLs around Novel Products and Consumers'

Subjective Knowledge: Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs

In the previous section, hypotheses were formulated on the assumption that VCLs have a moderating effect on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products. This section aims to predict consumers'

behavioural intentions when individuals have subjective knowledge in the presence of both VCLs and CLs regarding the novel products. ILs within an institutional order or between different institutional orders may exhibit varying dynamics, such as positive and negative synchronicity, or conflict. The section explains the rationale behind the hypotheses that assume the moderated moderation effect of CLs for guiding consumers' behavioural intentions.

2.10.1 Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs through VCLs on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products

The earlier Section 2.4 delved into the significance of both virtual communities and corporations as crucial institutional orders, emphasising their influence on consumers' behavioural intentions due to the value consumers place on the diverse perspectives or information provided by these sources. This section clarifies that CLs may function as a moderated moderation effect through VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products when both VCLs and CLs coexist.

Virtual communities are valued for their authentic information such as product knowledge, company updates, discount information and answers to product-related questions derived from users' collective experiences or knowledge (Chan and Li, 2010) although they may lack expertise when compared to information or knowledge provided by corporations (Kong et al., 2019; Ozuem et al., 2021). Furthermore, virtual communities provide a platform for social interaction based on the principle of reciprocity, in which individuals exchange information and support (Yang et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers actively participate in these communities to obtain preferential information, enhance their learning, and expedite their decision-making processes.

Similarly, corporations have a distinct advantage in consumer decision-making because they are the producers and often shape market trends (Jaworski et al., 2000). In particular, in the novel product consumption context, consumers are interested in understanding the future direction of innovative products and the potential benefits or drawbacks associated with them (Clarkson et al., 2018). To gain insights into the potential of novel products, consumers rely on the current and future strategies communicated by corporations, which comprise the elements forming CLs (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Individuals intentionally or unintentionally

collect and analyse information shared through diverse channels firms have, such as the company's official websites and strategic announcements, to comprehend the potential of these products (Browder et al., 2023). During the process, these potential consumers may naturally encounter and confront CLs surrounding novel products throughout this decision-making journey. The communication conveyed through CLs is a critical determinant in shaping consumer perceptions, expectations and intentions related to such products, and the communication of corporate strategies will have a significant impact on consumers' behavioural intentions (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006).

Although both VCLs and CLs significantly influence consumers' behavioural intentions, as described above, in real-world scenarios within the context of novel product consumption, firms frequently encounter limited consumer engagement due to the market's insufficient readiness for active product diffusion (Yang et al., 2019). This is partly due to challenges in effectively communicating the true potential of novel products to consumers and the limitations imposed by the need for confidentiality and secrecy (Veryzer, 1998). Due to these reasons, when consumers encounter products that exhibit complexity and novelty as a result of highly innovative technologies, they often face challenges in understanding the intricacies of these products, grasping their practical applications, and establishing appropriate criteria for making decisions (Stefani et al., 2020). Furthermore, consumers often perceive corporate information as biased towards promoting their own products, resulting in a decrease in trust and perceived reliability (Ozuem et al., 2021). In response to these challenges, consumers often turn to virtual communities for valuable information about novel products, seeking to supplement their existing knowledge and gain a more unbiased perspective (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Based on the reasons above, this thesis contends that when making decisions, consumers seek comprehensive information from both virtual communities and corporations, but virtual communities often take precedence as the primary source of information for consumers. In other words, contingent upon various factors, including the presence of VCLs, CLs may exert an indirect influence on consumer behaviour.

This viewpoint is theoretically supported by the resource dependence theory, which is commonly used to elucidate market orientation and new product development processes (Hillman et al., 2009). According to this theory, firms heavily rely on resources such as information about customer needs and user experiences, which are frequently available within virtual communities (Gruner and Homburg, 2000; Salomo, Steinhoff and Trommsdorff, 2003). Moreover, the literature on market orientation and innovative products consistently emphasises the critical importance of strong customer orientation, which is frequently found

in consumer communities (Joshi and Sharma, 2004; Carbonell et al., 2009), in achieving superior performance in innovative product development (Atuahene-Gima, 1996; de Brentani, 1995). This theoretical evidence emphasises a more direct influence of VCLs on consumer behaviour in comparison to CLs. Therefore, this thesis posits that CLs will indirectly moderate consumers' behavioural intentions by leveraging the insights and information surrounding novel products obtained from virtual communities.

To summarise, this thesis posits that virtual communities exert a direct impact on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions towards novel products, whereas corporations have an indirect influence.

The subsequent section will explain the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity when it coexists with VCLs synchronicity, as well as their interaction effect with consumers' subjective knowledge on consumers' behavioural intentions toward novel products.

2.10.2 Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity through VCLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions regarding Novel Products

This section endeavours to formulate hypotheses that elucidate how the directional alignment of VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity, when they coexist, influences consumers' behavioural intentions toward novel products. This reflects the observation that virtual communities and corporations demonstrate either positively or negatively synchronised logics, and the directions of VCLs and CLs are synchronised.

In reality, corporations acknowledge the competitive advantages that novel products can bring, and consumers endorse these products because they perceive the novel attributes as additional benefits provided by the manufacturer (Mukherjee and Hoyer, 2001). Thus, both may exhibit positive logic towards novel products simultaneously. In contrary, novel products can still provoke consumer risk aversion (Deng, 2020) and uncertainty (Hong et al., 2020), leading to resistance to consumers accepting them. Similarly, corporations may resist novel product production stemming from challenges such as securing sufficient budget, evaluating infrastructure readiness, training existing employees, recruiting appropriate talent for product development, formulating effective service and maintenance strategies, and managing the transition of consumers and suppliers to new communication channels (McIntyre, 1982; Schmid, 2019; Magnusson et al., 2022). Indeed, Lin et al. (2021) demonstrated that firms providing basic products within innovative sectors tend to

outperform leading innovators in terms of profitability. In such cases, both corporations and virtual communities may exhibit negative logic concurrently. Given the possible scenarios suggested above, this section aims to elucidate how the directional synchronicity of VCLs and CLs (i.e., the coexistence of positive VCLs synchronicity and positive CLs synchronicity or the coexistence of negative VCLs synchronicity and negative CLs synchronicity) influences the behavioural intentions of consumers with subjective knowledge toward novel products.

The preceding discussion in Section 2.10.1 discussed the direct impact of VCLs and the indirect impact of CLs on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. Academic evidence supports the notion that this divergent influence originates from consumers' recognition of virtual communities as more trustworthy sources of information than corporations, alongside corporations' deliberate integration of assets originating from these communities into their product development endeavours (Hagel, 1999; Brown et al., 2007; Porter and Donthu, 2008; Chen and Chang, 2013; Leonidou and Skarmeas, 2017; Cooper et al., 2023). Hence, it is reasonable to posit that when the logic emerges from two influential institutional orders pertinent to consumer decision-making align in the same direction, there is an increased likelihood of reinforcing consumer behavioural intentions toward novel products in line with the aligned direction of VCLs and CLs synchronicity. This assertion is grounded in their convergence toward a unified direction.

To be specific, this thesis assumes that sole VCLs synchronicity may not be sufficient to drive consumers' behavioural intentions toward novel products, as they may hesitate to adopt the product due to its novelty in the market, which entails uncertainty (Hong et al., 2020). In such scenarios, if consumers observe CLs synchronicity, reflecting their ability to influence market dynamics through their resources and capabilities in novel product development, CLs may exert additional normative pressures alongside the confidence gained from VCLs (Simpson, 1982; Tan and Wang, 2011; Ponte and Pesci, 2022).

Consequently, consumers may follow the unified direction indicated by the synchronised VCLs and CLs, further reinforcing their behavioural intentions with more confidence in their decision-making.

On top of that, this thesis attempts to argue that the impact of directional synchronicity between VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity will be particularly pronounced when it is associated with consumers' subjective knowledge. Supportedly, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) asserted that a community's social influence is more potent among knowledgeable consumers. In turn, consumers who possess subjective knowledge of novel products and

encounter VCLs surrounding such products will be more significantly influenced by these VCLs. Algesheimer et al. (2005) further support their argument by stating that as consumers become more familiar with products, their confidence in expressing positive or negative opinions within the community grows. Additionally, the unified direction of VCLs and CLs synchronicity will heighten the level of compatibility of novel products. This increased compatibility, when interacted with consumers' subjective knowledge, influences their perception of ease in accepting novel products as discussed in Section 2.5.

With the rationale built above, this thesis hypothesises that when the direction of VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity are aligned, CLs synchronicity is expected to function as a moderated moderation effect through VCLs synchronicity on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and behavioural intention towards novel products. As a result, when consumers have subjective knowledge about novel products, the concurrent presence of positive VCLs and CLs synchronicity will trigger positive behavioural intentions, whereas negative VCLs and CLs synchronicity will evoke negative behavioural intentions.

H4a: The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and product interest related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

H4b: The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and purchase intentions related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

2.10.3 Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Conflict through VCLs Conflict on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions Regarding Novel Products

This section examines the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions toward novel products in scenarios where the directions of VCLs and CLs diverge. Similar to conflicts arising within virtual communities due to divergent perspectives on novel products among individuals, corporations may also harbour conflicting views, leading to logical conflicts. As previously discussed in Section 2.10.2, corporations typically recognise the competitive advantages that novel products can offer, yet they may encounter challenges such as budgetary constraints, infrastructure evaluation,

talent recruitment for product development, and transitioning stakeholders to new communication channels. Consequently, corporations may adopt different perspectives and strategies in approaching novel products, potentially resulting in conflicting CLs. Including the case of CLs conflict, there can be nine scenarios illustrating cases where conflicts arise between VCLs and CLs as arrayed below. However, instead of predicting consumers' behavioural intentions in each case, this thesis focuses on exploring the moderated moderation effect of CLs through VCLs when the directions of VCLs and CLs are in conflict. :

- 1) VCLs positive synchronicity and CLs positive synchronicity
- 2) VCLs positive synchronicity and CLs negative synchronicity
- 3) VCLs positive synchronicity and CLs conflict
- 4) VCLs negative synchronicity and CLs positive synchronicity
- 5) VCLs negative synchronicity and CLs negative synchronicity
- 6) VCLs negative synchronicity and CLs conflict
- 7) VCLs conflict and CLs positive synchronicity
- 8) VCLs conflict and CLs negative synchronicity
- 9) VCLs conflict and CLs conflict

Section 2.10.2 posits that given the importance of both institutional orders, corporations, and virtual communities, in influencing consumers' decision-making processes, individuals encountering synchronicity between VCLs and CLs will tend to align with the direction of this synchronicity, thereby impacting their behavioural intentions toward novel products. This assertion is supported by the notion that ILs are ingrained in individuals' behavioural intentions, perceived as taken-for-granted rules (Thornton et al., 2012). However, amidst the coexistence of VCLs and CLs and if the direction of VCLs and CLs collide, it still remains uncertain whether individuals will show their behaviour aligned with the VCLs while overshadowing the impact of CLs' direction and vice versa. The following elucidates the potential consequences of conflict between VCLs and CLs and the reason behind.

Existing research emphasises the importance of considering individual decision-making within real-world situations that involve uncertainty, such as the consumption of novel products, while also taking into account social influences (Fudenberg and Levine, 2012; Maccheroni et al., 2012; Müller and Rau, 2019). Consensus theory contends that when people encounter uncertain products, there is a tendency for a majority to demonstrate a strong consensus in their opinions or behaviour, and such consensus provides individuals

with social proof and a perceived sense of accuracy in their consumer behaviour, particularly when compared to the minority's low consensus or non-consensus-a stance (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Maheswaran and Chaiken, 1991; Chen et al., 2023).

However, this thesis proposes that the absence of consensus or the presence of conflict regarding novel products can also have positive effects on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. According to Stepanova et al. (2020), conflict holds an advantage in facilitating comprehension of products. Similarly, Litterer (1966) argues that conflict 'energises people to activity' (p. 180), particularly in situations where innovation is desired. Therefore, individuals form and develop their own understandings of the conflict's subject through dynamic engagement in conflict processes in which they feel, perceive or act in opposition to another party (Pondy, 1967).

This underscores the fluid and evolving nature of conflict (Chandrasapth et al., 2021), suggesting that conflict surrounding novel products within virtual communities or between corporations has the potential to elevate the visibility of these products among individuals, thereby increasing consumer awareness and attention towards them. Supportedly, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) proposed that conflict has the potential to enhance consumer responsiveness in relation to the overall quality of firms' offerings. This stems from the formal and informal connections among individuals who are dedicated to discussing and addressing product-related issues within virtual environments (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Furthermore, individuals with subjective knowledge of novel products will integrate both their prior knowledge and new insights acquired through passive or active conflict engagement. This integration of diverse knowledge can help in navigating the intricacies of conflicts by fostering various forms of awareness of novel products among the participants, including different perspectives, critical knowledge gaps and a holistic understanding of the products (Jordan, 2014; Wouters et al., 2018). Consequently, the conflict between VCLs and CLs towards novel products will facilitate consumers to perceive a greater level of engagement from various institutional orders regarding novel products as a positive sign. This positively heightens consumers' product attention, which results in increased product familiarity in a chain.

Meanwhile, this thesis proposes that the CLs will take primacy over VCLs when they coexist. This is because CLs, which reflect ILs shaped by corporations, wield considerable market dynamics, using their resources and capabilities for the development of novel products and appeal to consumers (Day, 1994; Teece et al., 1997). Consumers tend to place greater trust

in well-established corporations and their brands, and these firms and brands are the dominant subjects for the CLs formations (Amine, 1998; Benedictus et al., 2010). Therefore, ILs introduced by corporations will be a much more significant facilitator in increasing consumers' trust in the adoption of novel products. Furthermore, members of virtual communities often have weaker interpersonal connections, resulting in less collective influence (McPherson and Sauder, 2013). With this rationale, this thesis proposes that when confronted with the conflict between VCLs and CLs, individuals may pay more attention to the logic presented by CLs in their decision-making. Based on this logic, the following hypothesis is formulated.

H5: The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and purchase intentions related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that, when VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.

The following section will identify potential mediators that play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between subjective knowledge and consumers' behavioural intention towards novel products. Additionally, it will propose potential mediators that will be evaluated and potentially ruled out through alternative explanations in Study 4.

2.11 Serial Mediation Effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions Regarding Novel Products

This section delves into the psychological mechanisms linking consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products, drawing on a comprehensive review of psychological literature and institutional theories. Specifically, this thesis proposes a serial mediation effect involving the two mediators, choice confidence and justifiability. Derived from a theory of goal setting, these two factors operate as a set of goals that steer consumers' decision-making processes (Heitmann et al., 2007).

2.11.1 Consumption Goals and Goal-Based Determinants

According to Locke and Latham (1990)'s theory of goal setting, goals act as primary drivers of human behaviour. Within this theoretical framework, consumers tend to choose products or services that align with their established goals. Similarly, Bettman (1979) proposed that consumers construct a hierarchy of goals to facilitate product choices because choices

congruent with their goals are perceived as rational decisions. This reliance on goals for decision-making arises due to the limitations of individual rationality during the decision process (Simon, 1955). Consequently, consumers, operating under the premise that individuals act rationally, tend to prioritise decisions that lead to satisfactory outcomes over strictly optimal ones (March, 1978). Elaborating on that individuals establish goals to pursue the most gratifying available choice, Heitmann et al. (2007) proposed different goal-based determinants that vary depending on whether the goals are approach-oriented, focused on reaching or maintaining desired outcomes, or avoidance-oriented, focused on avoiding or eliminating undesired outcomes. In terms of approach-oriented goals, two goal-based determinants of choice satisfaction were proposed: enhancing confidence and justifying the decision, referred to as choice confidence and justifiability, respectively.

Conversely, the determinants of avoidance goals included anticipated regret and uncertainty avoidance. Before making a decision, consumers with high anticipated regret mentally simulate potential alternative outcomes and anticipate the emotional costs associated with each scenario (Shih and Schau, 2011). Similarly, when confronted with uncertain situations, consumers with high uncertainty avoidance experience significant stress and anxiety, resulting in more cautious and hesitant behaviour when faced with unfamiliar and uncertain product offerings. The avoidance goals are consistent with the prevention focus of the regulatory focus theory, which explains how individuals' self-regulation guides their product evaluations, based on inherent emotional trade-offs between promotion and prevention motivational systems, as proposed by Higgins (1997). While prevention-focused individuals prioritise safety and responsibilities, approach-oriented goals are aligned with promotion-focused individuals who are driven by aspirations and achievements.

This thesis suggests that approach-oriented goals will play a primary role in shaping consumers' behavioural intentions when it comes to consuming novel products, consistent with a focus on promotion. This proposition is rooted in the notion, as discussed earlier in Section 2.1.2, that individuals possess an innate inclination towards novelty-seeking behaviour, particularly evident in their consumption patterns of innovative products. Hence, consumers are predisposed to actively seek out and embrace novel products rather than avoiding them (Hirschman, 1980), aligning with the promotion-focused nature of approach-oriented goals. Therefore, within the scope of this thesis, choice confidence and justifiability have been suggested as potential mediators. However, to ensure the robustness of the mediation effect in the proposed conceptual model, factors rooted in the prevention motivational system, such as anticipated regret and uncertainty avoidance, will be further

investigated in Section 2.11.5. This procedure will aid in elucidating why promotion motivational system has more explanatory power within the model. The subsequent section furnishes explanations concerning the variables within the research model of this thesis and their interconnections. It illuminates the mediation effect of the proposed mediators concerning other variables, thereby elucidating their connections.

2.11.2 Choice Confidence and Consumers' Subjective Knowledge

Choice confidence pertains to the level of certainty and confidence that consumers possess in their ability to make effective decisions regarding the purchase and utilisation of products or services (Flavián et al., 2016). It reflects consumers' confidence in their knowledge, competence and judgement related to these unique products, and this choice confidence serves as a determinant of product choice (Heitmann et al., 2007). Interpreting this, when consumers possess heightened confidence in product selection owing to their trust in their knowledge, they are more likely to perceive those products as gratifying choices, resulting in an upsurge in behavioural intent towards such products. This, again, implies that individuals leverage their knowledge structure to facilitate the pursuit of rational decision-making. Knowledge structure encompasses a systematically organised and interconnected accumulation of product-related experiential memories (Jonassen and Wang, 1993). It enables consumers to exhibit a propensity for constructing preference structures, which facilitates the identification of which consumer choices are more likely to be satisfying (Bettman et al., 1998).

Consumer knowledge is categorised into two distinct forms: (a) objective knowledge and (b) subjective knowledge (elaborated upon in Section 2.1.2). This thesis, in particular, directs its attention towards the facet of subjective knowledge as an integral component of consumers' knowledge structure. Extensive research in the field of marketing has established a positive correlation between consumers' subjective knowledge, choice confidence and their positive behaviour towards products or services (Brucks, 1985; Schmidt and Spreng, 1996; Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; Bearden et al., 2001; O'cass, 2004). Several studies have found that even when controlling for consumers' objective knowledge, higher subjective knowledge leads to greater confidence in their decision-making abilities, emphasising the distinguishable significance of subjective knowledge in addition to objective knowledge (Park et al., 1994; Radecki and Jaccard, 1995; Parker et al., 2012). Similarly, Hadar et al. (2013) revealed that decision-makers were more likely to invest in options about which they believed they are knowledgeable, even if their actual knowledge of those options was limited because they felt

more confident that these choices would yield better outcomes. This observation highlights the significant impact of subjective knowledge on behavioural intentions and the mediating role of choice confidence between them.

Furthermore, this thesis proposes that within the context of this thesis, which focuses on the consumption of novel products, the role of subjective knowledge in enhancing consumers' behavioural intentions toward novel products becomes even more prominent, particularly when compared with objective knowledge, which is another type of knowledge. Specifically, objective knowledge refers to the extent of an individual's factual understanding (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999). However, novel products have not yet achieved widespread adoption among the majority of individuals due to the relatively limited number of individuals who have encountered and engaged with such products (Hirunyawipada and Paswan, 2006).

Therefore, leveraging objective knowledge as an enhancer of consumers' behavioural intentions for novel products is somewhat constrained (Lee and Lee, 2009; Fatha and Ayoubi, 2023). In contrast, as a result of the scarcity of comprehensive objective knowledge of novel products, individuals rely on their subjective knowledge—a reservoir of personal experiences, beliefs, and perceptions (Carlson et al., 2009). In fact, Carlson et al. (2009) explained subjective knowledge as 'a surrogate for objective knowledge'. This implies that in situations where objective knowledge is limited or unavailable, individuals may rely on their subjective understanding to guide their decisions and behaviours. This suggests that subjective knowledge allows individuals to make judgments and choices based on their own interpretations of a given situation or topic when the use of objective knowledge is limited, that is, novel product consumption. Moreover, Carlson et al. (2009) emphasise that despite the two types of knowledge being conceptually distinct, the significance of subjective knowledge in evaluating knowledge calibration in comprehending the informational foundation of decision-making processes.

To summarise, this thesis recognises the close connection between knowledge structure and choice confidence and acknowledges the crucial role of subjective knowledge as one type of knowledge structure. In particular, this thesis suggests that the significance of subjective knowledge is more evident in the consumption of novel products to enhance consumers' confidence in decision-making, where collective experiences are scarce. Hence, this thesis posits a correlation between subjective knowledge, choice confidence, and behavioural intentions towards novel products.

2.11.3 Choice Confidence and Justifiability

Section 2.11.2 discussed the pivotal role of subjective knowledge as an intrinsic motivator, which plays a central role in fostering choice confidence in the realm of novel product consumption. While choice confidence serves as a significant driver in shaping consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products alongside subjective knowledge, this thesis argues that additional steps are required to bridge the gap between subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions in this context. It proposes the construct called *justifiability* as a pivotal factor in this regard.

Indeed, Alba and Hutchinson (2000) emphasise the importance of achieving a balanced assessment of information validity grounded in both objective and subjective knowledge, a critical aspect of rational decision-making. In other words, choice confidence stemming from subjective knowledge alone may lack the necessary impetus to solidify one's behavioural intentions towards novel products. In fact, novel products often introduce new features or functionalities, inherently carrying a level of risk associated with their adoption (Thompson et al., 2005; He et al., 2010). Consequently, although subjective knowledge helps to enhance consumers' choice confidence, it is not sufficient to alleviate or compensate for the hesitancy or resistance commonly associated with such products since it does not offer universal assurance regarding the products (Moschis, 1987). Therefore, this thesis posits that, given the inherent uncertainty and reduced confidence stemming from perceived risks and unfamiliarity with novel products, relying solely on subjective knowledge may not instil enough choice confidence to translate into concrete behavioural intentions.

At the same time, this thesis proposes that in a compensatory capacity, the social environment is suggested to function as an additional catalyst, augmenting the process of novel product acceptance and further stimulating the development of consumers' behavioural intentions towards such products. Indeed, in the study of Moschis (1987), the significance of product evaluations by others in shaping a cohesive preference structure was underscored. Considering the influential role of social environments in bridging the gap between moderate motivation and behavioural intentions, this thesis asserts that the construct of justifiability effectively encapsulates the underlying dynamics. Therefore, it is posited as a mediator, subsequent to the first mediator, choice confidence.

Justifiability refers to the extent to which consumers perceive their product choices to be appropriate, acceptable, and congruent with their personal values, societal norms, and external standards (Inman and Zeelenberg, 2002). It serves as a psychological mechanism

that validates and supports the consumers' decision, making it more socially acceptable and aligned with their personal preferences (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014). Heitmann et al. (2007) propose justifiability as a significant social factor influencing consumers' intention to adopt products. Similarly, Rogers (2003) elucidated that potential innovative product adopters obtain information through diverse communication channels, highlighting that innovation diffusion occurs through a social process. Payne et al. (1993), again, emphasise the role of the social environment in shaping consumer preference structures, highlighting the impact of exposure to opinions and evaluations. Considering this, this thesis emphasises the shift from choice confidence to justifiability for shaping consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

This thesis proposes that choice confidence, which stems from individuals' comprehension of novel products and their decision-making motivations, prompts them to seek validation and justification for their choices. In other words, when individuals engage in decision-making processes, it becomes imperative for them to perceive their choices as justified and socially acceptable within the framework of prevailing societal norms, a viewpoint suggested by institutional theorists (Beetham, 1993; Inman and Zeelenberg, 2002; Lok and De Rond, 2013; Lenz and Viola, 2017). Advocating the perspective of institutional studies, this thesis proposes that comprehending the ILs surrounding individuals facilitates this process. In particular, the ILs manifested within virtual communities and corporations, which individuals commonly reference when making decisions about novel product consumption, will affect consumers' behavioural intentions towards such products.

In essence, this thesis posits that the perception of justifiability plays a pivotal role in driving consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. This influence is mediated by choice confidence, while the connection from justifiability to behavioural intentions is propelled by social validation, which enhances a degree of tentative choice confidence regarding novel products. Ultimately, this encourages favourable behavioural intentions towards novel products. Based on the aforementioned rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H6: Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have a significant indirect effect on purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products through serial mediation of choice confidence and justifiability.

2.11.4 Serial Mediation Effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Behavioural Intentions Regarding Novel Products in the Presence of VCLs Dynamic (Synchronicity or Conflict)

The previous section proposed the serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability in the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. This section proposes that the presence of VCLs dynamic (VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict) moderates those relationships with the following rationales.

According to Bacharach and Mundell (1993), the diversity of actors' goals and their varying preferences for information and knowledge hold significant implications for shaping behavioural intentions. ILs play a pivotal role in guiding the direction of knowledge that these actors should pursue (Haveman and Gualtieri, 2017). Additionally, Laihonen and Kokko (2023) argue that ILs have a substantial impact on knowledge management. Expanding upon this premise, this thesis suggests that the existence of VCLs likely plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' knowledge structure, thereby influencing their subjective knowledge. Moreover, as individuals grasp VCLs during interactions within virtual communities, they gain more confidence in their decision-making abilities (Alba and Hutchinson, 2000; O'cass, 2004). During the process, they acquire insight into the norms or sentiments towards novel products, which helps them make more informed decisions, resulting in increased choice confidence. Additionally, since ILs serve as a source of legitimacy for individuals' decision-making (Thornton et al., 2012), the influence of VCLs can enhance individuals' sense of justifiability, thereby amplifying more assured behavioural intentions towards novel products.

In detail, when individuals encounter VCLs, certain ILs stored within their cognition become activated, drawing from their existing subjective knowledge (Bitektine and Song, 2023). This activation of ILs subsequently shapes their perceptions of legitimacy, which encompass their overall assessments of the desirability, propriety, or appropriateness of actions within a socially constructed framework of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995). Crucially, these perceptions of legitimacy directly influence the sense of justifiability, as the correlation between legitimacy and justifiability is intuitive: justifiability pertains to how consumers perceive their choices as fitting, acceptable, and congruent with their personal values and societal norms (Inman and Zeelenberg, 2002). Hence, the presence and exposure to VCLs for individuals may magnify the relationships between subjective knowledge, choice

confidence, and justifiability, ultimately heightening individuals' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Regarding the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity and conflict for shaping the direction of individuals' behavioural intentions towards novel products, it follows the same rationale presented in Section 2.7 and 2.9, respectively. Essentially, this thesis suggests that positive VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict will lead individuals with subjective knowledge to exhibit positive behavioural intentions towards novel products by enhancing choice confidence and justifiability, while the opposite holds true for negative VCLs synchronicity. To be specific, individuals with subjective knowledge of novel products tend to perceive these products as well-aligned with their needs and preferences (Helfat and Raubitschek, 2000; Moreau et al., 2001), indicating a high level of compatibility, which refers to the degree of fit between a product and consumers' existing values, needs, and experiences during product adoption (Moore and Benbasat, 1991). Furthermore, the synchronicity of VCLs, indicating a unified attitude towards novel products among members, further bolsters the compatibility of these products, influencing consumers' perception of how easily they can adopt them. Consequently, when VCLs exhibit positive logic synchronicity, the overall positive reception of novel products by consumers enhances compatibility (Mahr et al., 2014), and their subjective knowledge synergistically reinforces both choice confidence and justifiability, leading to stronger positive behavioural intentions towards novel products. In contrast, when consumers with subjective knowledge face negative logic synchronicity, it reduces choice confidence and justifiability, amplifying negative behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Meanwhile, when individuals encounter VCLs conflict, they may still exhibit positive behavioural intentions towards novel products. This is because they have already developed somewhat favourable attitudes through their subjective knowledge, which helps them become more acquainted with novel products. Given individuals' inherent novelty-seeking nature, they perceive the innovativeness of novel products as indicative of advancement and tend to view such products positively (Saridakis et al., 2019). Consequently, their subjective knowledge mitigates the lack of familiarity with novel products, and it further cause a positive confirmation bias towards such products, reinforcing their understanding of novel products as positive (Athota et al., 2023).

Furthermore, conflict surrounding novel products can stimulate individuals' comprehension by encouraging their active engagement and participation in interactions related to these

products (Litterer, 1966; Stepanova et al., 2020). Consequently, VCLs conflict motivates individuals to immerse themselves in discussions, allowing them to mould and enhance their perceptions of novel products through active participation in conflicts within virtual communities, which increases familiarity with such products (Pondy, 1967). Notably, the confirmation bias, which tends to favour novel products positively, prompts individuals to actively seek out positive reviews or information that aligns with their beliefs while disregarding or dismissing contradictory reviews or information when they encounter VCLs conflict (Mercier and Sperber, 2017). Based on the rationale provided above, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H7: The mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability between the relationship of consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by VCLs, such that positive (negative) VCLs synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs are in conflict, the moderating effect will be positive.

2.11.5 Potential Mediators and Alternative Explanations

Section 2.11.4 has outlined the serial mediation effect of two constructs, choice confidence and justifiability, rooted in the promotion-motivational system, to elucidate the proposed research model. In this section, additional constructs originating from the prevention-motivational system, namely (a) anticipated regret, (b) uncertainty avoidance, and (c) conformity tendency, which are relevant to consumer decision-making, will be explored as potential factors. By exploring the competing mediators, it aims to enhance the robustness of the research framework proposed in this thesis and provide more strong evidence for the mediation claim by demonstrating the inadequacy of alternative explanations. In a manner analogous to mediator selection, which involves working with a theory-derived mediation hypothesis and gathering data to scrutinise the null hypothesis of no mediation, the three constructs-anticipated regret, uncertainty avoidance, and conformity tendency-were chosen through a comprehensive literature review within the boundary of the research context of this thesis.

As discussed in Section 2.11.1, anticipated regret and uncertainty avoidance are categorised as avoidance goal-based determinants (Heitmann et al., 2007), whereas the proposed mediators, choice confidence and justifiability, belong to approach-oriented goal-based determinants. However, as proposed in Section 2.11.4, approach-oriented goals may

predominate in the research model of this thesis, which focuses on the interaction between consumers with subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. Nonetheless, avoidance-oriented determinants may still hold relevance in understanding consumer behaviour, especially in the context of innovative product consumption (Yildiz et al., 2021). Indeed, risk mitigation is repeatedly emphasised in decision-making processes related to innovative products in marketing literature (Hirst et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2019; Bekki and Turker, 2022). Hence, the exploration of these constructs allows for a more comprehensive investigation into the fundamental mechanisms that influence consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

Moreover, conformity tendency represents another potential mediator. It reflects the inclination to adapt one's beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours to align with the prevailing norms within a specific group (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Lascau et al., 1995). This thesis explains the impact of social context on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products with the concept of ILs, which acknowledges the embeddedness of individuals within institutional orders. Similarly, the concept of social conformity also somewhat incorporates this aspect while explaining that individuals are compelled to adhere to the specific goals of the institutional orders to which they belong (Sherif, 1961). In fact, social conformity theory proposes that individuals' behaviour changes in relation to their peers within a group, especially when they face ambiguity and uncertainty, leading them to seek information by observing the actions of others, known as informational social influence (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955). Undoubtedly, the consumption of novel products frequently occurs under conditions of uncertainty, thereby aligning with this premise (Bstieler, 2005). Therefore, considering the potential of theoretical link between social conformity and ILs, it is plausible to propose that an individual's inclination to conform, known as conformity tendency, may play as a mediator in shaping their behavioural intentions towards novel products. The mediation effect of the three constructs proposed in this section will be tested in Study 4 to rule out potential alternative explanations.

2.11.6 Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs through VCLs on the Relationship between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Choice Confidence

This section introduces a hypothesis outlining a serial mediation mechanism in which choice confidence and justifiability function as mediators between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. Furthermore, the hypothesis incorporates the moderating impact of VCLs and the moderated moderation

effect of CLs, all while considering the potential impact of the dynamics inherent in VCLs and CLs on guiding consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products.

The same logic described in Section 2.8 was used to develop the hypothesis. In essence, this thesis proposes that when VCLs and CLs coexist, and if they exhibit positive (or negative) logic synchronicity, consumers with subjective knowledge will be guided to have more (less) choice confidence regarding novel products, resulting in exhibiting positive (or negative) behavioural intentions. On the contrary, when VCLs and CLs conflict, it is expected to raise awareness about novel products among individuals as discussed in Section 2.9. Such awareness contributes to a more positive understanding of these products by acting in conjunction with consumers' subjective knowledge (Jordan, 2014; Wouters et al., 2018). Consequently, logic collisions between VCLs and CLs are expected to bolster the relationship between subjective knowledge and choice confidence regarding novel products. However, the direction of CLs takes primacy in shaping consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. This is attributed to the relatively weaker interpersonal bonds among virtual community members (McPherson and Sauder, 2013) while corporations can foster trust and confidence in consumers for adopting novel products by leveraging their resources and influence on steering market dynamics (Day, 1994; Teece et al., 1997), as discussed in Section 2.10.3. The hypotheses below succinctly encapsulate the aforementioned explanation.

H8: The moderation effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and choice confidence related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.

The subsequent chapter will delve into the methodology used to test the hypotheses proposed in Section 2 and present the findings.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Analysis

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological approaches employed in this thesis. It begins by discussing the research philosophy and paradigm that underpin the research, providing a theoretical framework for the research. The chapter then outlines the specific methods used to collect and analyse data, including the experimental study designs implemented. Finally, this chapter concludes by presenting the results of the analysis, drawing upon the data collected during the experiments conducted.

3.1 Methodological Positioning and Experimental Study

This section aims to provide a detailed explanation of the research philosophy, paradigm, and methods adopted in this thesis. It begins by discussing the research philosophy, which serves as the guiding framework for the study. The different research paradigms are then explored, highlighting their characteristics and implications for the research process. Based on this discussion, the most suitable method for this study is identified as experimental research.

3.1.1 General Understanding of Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a cornerstone of the researchers' belief and assumption for knowledge development. The philosophical approach guides researchers to assume the nature of the truth and the way of knowledge acquisition (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2002). Therefore, the chosen research philosophy affects the decision of the purpose, design, methodology and methods of the research, as well as data analysis and interpretation (Park et al., 2020). However, selecting a scientific research philosophy is inherently challenging due to its complex nature, as it involves integrating multiple factors such as individual perceptions of the world, beliefs, and attitudes. Consequently, researchers are faced with the task of encompassing and reconciling these various factors to arrive at a unified research philosophy (Little, 1998).

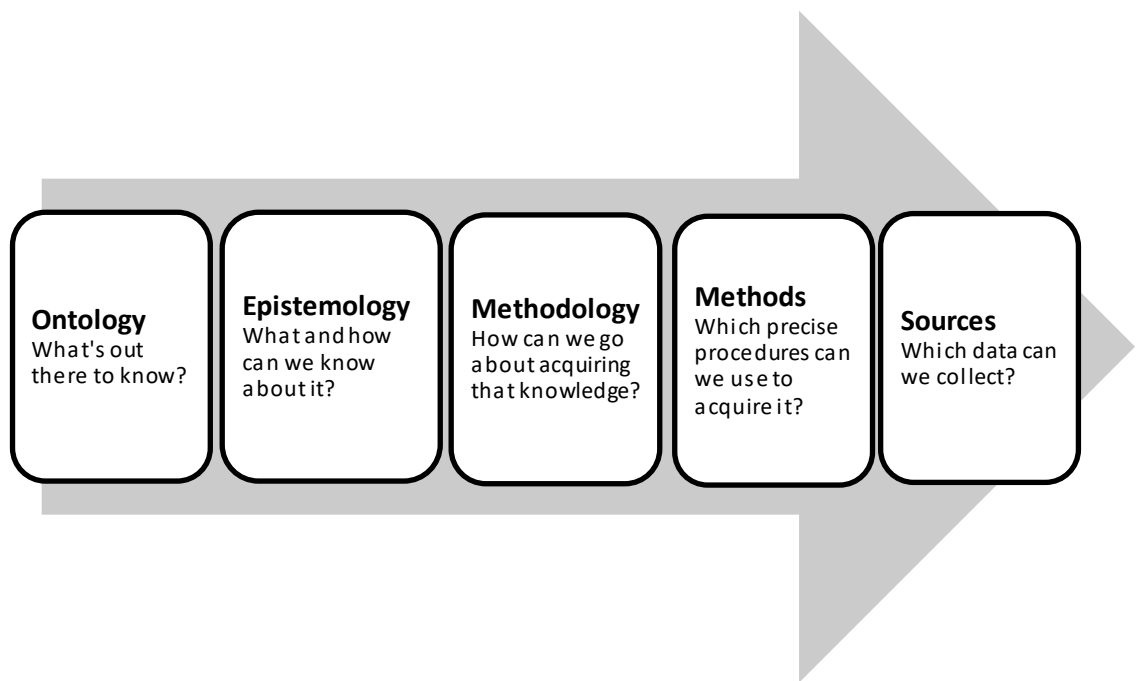


Figure 8 Research Philosophy, The Interrelationship between the Building Blocks of Research (Figure Adopted from Hay, 2002, p 64.)

The process of a directional shift in research paradigm developed by Hay (2002) aids researchers by enabling them to analyse and shape their research philosophy through a thorough examination of the philosophical, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological aspects of their planned study (Figure 8). Figure 8, adopted from Hay (2002)'s work, is a structured and systematic framework that consists of five key questions, which are categorised into research philosophy and methodology. By engaging in this process, scholars are empowered to critically evaluate and refine their research philosophy, contributing to the coherence and robustness of their overall research approach.

In the directional process of Figure 8, the first part consists of two elements, ontology, and epistemology. Ontology refers to the study of what truly exists and what can be known (Crotty, 1998). It encompasses the understanding that there is a social reality that exists, and this reality can be perceived and interpreted differently by researchers based on their perspectives and experiences (Saunders et al., 2009). Epistemology, on the other hand, focuses on how knowledge is acquired. It explores the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge being pursued. It examines the ways in which knowledge is obtained, validated, and justified (Crotty, 1998). Together, ontology and epistemology provide a foundation for understanding the nature of reality and the process of knowledge creation in research.

Researchers diverge in their research philosophy when they establish their own beliefs about ontology and epistemology. The combination of specific ontological and epistemological perspectives gives rise to a philosophical standpoint, typically denoted by an *-ism* suffix, which represents a particular system, practice, or philosophy. Examples of such philosophical perspectives include *positivism* and *interpretivism*, which will be discussed further in this section.

Selecting a research philosophy can be a daunting task due to the multitude of ontological and epistemological perspectives available since these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and offer various combinations of philosophical beliefs (Rudolph et al., 2015). A comprehensive list of all ontological and epistemological positions or perspectives does not exist, as they have been proposed in different disciplines and may differ depending on the research area or context (Grix, 2002). Moreover, research philosophies may be referred to by different names, even if they share similar fundamental principles and beliefs about knowledge, reality, and the role of research. For instance, Empiricism and Positivism share similar principles however, they are labelled differently (Reichenbach, 1936). Empiricism emphasises sensory experience and observation. Similarly, positivism centres on scientific methods and objective observation (Moore, 2010). These terms are occasionally used interchangeably to describe research philosophies that prioritise empirical evidence and objective observation in the pursuit of knowledge.

Although there is some interchangeability in the use of research philosophies with similar meanings, certain approaches tend to dominate for the specific research fields. This thesis focuses on the two primary approaches that prevail in the social sciences: (a) Positivism and (b) Interpretivism (Burrell and Morgan, 2017). In particular, the field of business management within the social sciences predominantly adheres to these two philosophical perspectives, forming the basis for many studies conducted in this domain (Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Weber, 2004; Brand, 2009; Sanchez et al., 2023).

Positivism is a philosophical perspective that emerged in the 19th century, emphasising the use of scientific methods and observation to understand the natural and social world (Tuli, 2010). The ontological position of positivism is that a single objective reality exists independently of human perception or interpretation (Moore, 2010). This objective reality can be observed, measured, and studied through empirical methods. The epistemological position of positivism emphasises using scientific methods to gain knowledge about the world (Saunders et al., 2009). According to positivism, knowledge can be acquired through

empirical observation and experimentation (Tuli, 2010). Therefore, positivists seek knowledge based on objective facts and evidence rather than subjective beliefs or opinions. In addition, positivists emphasise the importance of verification and falsification in scientific inquiry. In detail, positivists believe that there is a single reality that is measurable, and by finding generalised patterns within the data and, consequently, with strong emphasis on identifying causal relationships, they tend to investigate and confirm the existence of a relationship between variables. Considering these, it is natural for positivists to be immersed in quantitative methods.

In contrast, *Interpretivism* assumes that they can gain world knowledge by interpreting the meaning of human behaviour in a specific context (Tuli, 2010). The ontological position of interpretivism is that social reality is complex and multi-layered since the world is constructed through the interactions and interpretations of individuals or groups. Interpretivism holds that the social reality is not a fixed or objective entity but rather a subjective and dynamic one continuously constructed and reconstructed through human experiences and interactions (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). The epistemological position of interpretivism emphasises the importance of subjective understanding and interpretation in the social sciences. To summarise, according to interpretivism, social reality is not accessible through objective or scientific methods alone rather it requires a deeper understanding of the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals or groups ascribe to their experiences. Hence, interpretivists tend to gain knowledge through the meanings and interpretations that individuals or groups ascribe to their experiences, with the qualitative approach, such as interviews, serving as the dominant methodological approach within this perspective (Tavory, 2020).

In light of the two predominant research philosophies in social science and considering the research questions addressed in this thesis, positivism has been selected as the research philosophy of choice. To be specific, the primary objective of this thesis is to examine and validate assumed causal relationships between variables based on existing knowledge from literature and quantify the effects in order to provide practical implications for marketers in the context of novel products. Furthermore, this thesis aims to present findings derived from thorough examination of scientific hypotheses drawn from theories using empirical data gathered from real-world observations. This approach aligns with the ontological standpoint of positivism. By adopting the positivist approach, this thesis aims to generalise the identified causal patterns derived from the data and yield more reliable results for the novel products industry.

The subsequent section will explore various reasoning and methodological approaches. Given the selected research philosophy, which is in line with positivism, the reasoning approach and the appropriate methodology for this thesis will be determined accordingly.

3.1.2 Positioning of Reasoning Approach and Methodological Approach

Different research philosophies advocate distinct reasoning methods as they establish a connection between research philosophy and the complete research process (Hay, 2002). *Reasoning* refers to the cognitive process of drawing logical conclusions or making inferences based on evidence or premises (Hay, 2002). It is a process of connecting ideas or statements to arrive at a logical conclusion. In research, two distinct approaches of reasoning are commonly employed: (a) Inductive and (b) Deductive approaches (Saunders et al., 2009).

In the *inductive approach*, researchers start by gathering specific observations or data and then proceed to develop broader theories or generalisations based on those observations (Nicholls, 2009). It involves a bottom-up process where patterns and themes emerge from the collected data, leading to the theory development or conceptual frameworks (Saunders et al., 2009). The focus is on exploring and comprehending social phenomena within their specific contexts, which enables the generation of in-depth and rich insights (Thomas, 2003).

In contrary, in the *deductive approach*, researchers commence with a theory or hypothesis and then gather and analyse data to test that hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2009). This approach follows a top-down process, starting with a general concept and progressing towards specific observations to confirm or disprove the hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2009). Consequently, quantitative research methods, which often involve the collection of numerical data, are employed for deductive reasoning approach (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). By employing statistical methods to analyse the data, researchers can ascertain the results of hypothesis testing and assess the validity of their theories (Azungah, 2018).

It is noteworthy that each reasoning approach tends to align with specific research methodological approaches (Antwi and Hamza, 2015), notably the (a) Qualitative approach and the (b) Quantitative approach. Although both reasoning approaches are adaptable to both quantitative and qualitative studies (Hyde, 2000), a specific reasoning approach ensures consistency across the entirety of the research process, encompassing methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of findings, thereby maintaining alignment with the philosophical standpoint (Diderich, 2020). Therefore, there is a more suitable

alignment between a specific reasoning approach and its corresponding methodological approach. The two primary methodological approaches will be further elucidated below.

Qualitative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the why behind social phenomena by delving into the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings attributed to them by individuals or groups (Lehnert et al., 2016). However, qualitative research is more time-consuming and susceptible to researcher bias, subjectivity, limited generalisability, and a lack of replicability when compared to quantitative research (Mwita, 2022). On the other hand, *Quantitative approach* addresses some of the weaknesses of qualitative research. It is often perceived as more objective and precise because it employs validated measurements to assess constructs within a large sample size (Sürücü and Maslakci, 2020). Consequently, quantitative research benefits from enhanced generalisability and replicability.

However, quantitative approach still faces three common criticisms, which highlight the limitations of this approach: (a) lack of depth, (b) contextual constraints, and (c) reductionism (Saunders et al., 2009). Elucidating from the first limitation, quantitative research may provide limited depth in understanding the complexities and nuances of social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009). The focus on objective and measurable data sometimes overlooks the rich contextual details that may contribute to a deeper understanding of social phenomena. Secondly, quantitative research places emphasis on statistical analysis, thereby potentially favouring numerical data over qualitative insights (Saunders et al., 2009; Queiró et al., 2017). This inclination may lead to the oversight of critical contextual factors. Finally, quantitative research frequently involves simplifying complex social phenomena into quantitative variables. While this approach facilitates precision and statistical analysis, it can foster a reductionist perspective, thereby simplifying and neglecting the intricate dynamics and underlying mechanisms involved (Saunders et al., 2009).

Despite the acknowledged weaknesses of quantitative research, this thesis employs deductive reasoning using the quantitative approach, consistent with the positivist approaches. By adopting deductive reasoning, this research expects to interpret, generalise, and identify patterns in the study results while minimising potential biases inherent in qualitative research. Additionally, it is anticipated that the choice of the quantitative approach as the methodological approach will enhance the objectivity and reliability of the research outcomes, addressing a commonly cited weakness of qualitative research. In detail, this thesis aims to address the research questions pertaining to the examination and

confirmation of assumed causal relationships between consumers' subjective knowledge, direction of VCLs and CLs, and consumers' behavioural intentions, particularly in the context of consuming novel products. By quantifying the likelihood of behavioural intentions in different situations related to ILs regarding novel products, this thesis ultimately aims to provide marketers with practical implications based on reliable and objective research findings. Consequently, deductive reasoning employing the quantitative approach was selected for this thesis.

In summary, the adopted deductive approach followed by a positivistic stance enables this research to test causal relationships between the constructs considered in this thesis as it was aimed to empirically test and confirm the hypotheses derived from extant theories. The chosen research approach of positivist, deductive, and quantitative will allow this research to dedicate to existing theory expansion with objectivity.

3.1.3 Method: Experimental Approach

The preceding section established the research paradigm, methodology, and reasoning approach. While quantitative research and deductive reasoning allow for the use of various research methods, such as survey research, secondary data analysis, longitudinal research, and quasi-experimental research (which resembles experimental research but lacks random assignment of participants to groups), the thesis has opted for the experimental method due to its distinctive advantages. This section will provide a general understanding of experiments, discuss different types of experiments, and assess their pros and cons in terms of validity. Subsequently, the most appropriate method for this study will be determined.

3.1.4 General Understanding of Experimental Research and the Selection of Laboratory Experiment as a Research Method

Experimental research is known as one of the most rigorous research designs for explanatory research as it offers the strongest causal inference (Armstrong and Kepler, 2018). One of the key strengths of the experimental method, which distinguishes it from other types of quantitative studies such as surveys, is the ability to manipulate variables (Perdue and Summers, 1986). In experimental study designs, researchers carefully define a set of predictors and create different treatment conditions to measure and establish their exclusive effects on outcome variables (Perdue and Summers, 1986). This process of manipulation contributes to the attainment of *construct validity*, which refers to how effectively a set of

indicators reflects the concept of interest that is not directly measurable (Perdue and Summers, 1986). Experimental research benefits from the use of independent variables that are already defined in previous literature, providing a stronger foundation for establishing causal relationships and examining the effects of specific factors (Saunders et al., 2009). Through comparing the responses of participants exposed to different experimental conditions, experimental studies enable the identification of the effects of manipulated variables on a dependent variable, thereby facilitating the determination of causal relationships related to the research interest.

Another key advantage of experiments, *random assignment* plays a crucial role in this process. By randomly assigning participants to different conditions, the experimental design helps identify the sources of variation in the variables of interest (Patzner, 1996). This approach ensures comparability among the groups, thereby enhancing the *internal validity* of the study, which refers to its ability to demonstrate causality. Additionally, transparent reporting of the experimental process contributes to the external validity of the study, ensuring the generalisability of research results and the potential for replication in other contexts (Patzner, 1996).

Nevertheless, it can be challenging to account for all potential confounding variables that might influence the dependent variable during the course of the experiment. Factors such as participant characteristics, environmental influences, or biases from the experimenters themselves can be introduced as extraneous variables, thus compromising the internal validity of the study (Brewer and Crano, 2000). Furthermore, a limitation of experimental research lies in its ecological validity or generalisability to real-world settings. The controlled conditions of an experiment may not fully capture the complexity and variability of real-life situations therefore, the findings may not be readily applicable to other populations or contexts. Moreover, conducting an experimental study can be time-consuming and resource-intensive (Rogers and Revesz, 2019).

Despite these drawbacks, experiments have garnered considerable attention in the realm of business and management, particularly among marketing researchers, owing to their capacity to elucidate cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Kardes, 1996; Antonides et al., 2002; Morales et al., 2017). The subsequent section explores the differences between various types of experiments, with a specific focus on field experiments and lab experiments.

3.1.4.1 Field Experiment

The fundamental process of manipulating or controlling causal variables, measuring their effects, and comparing them remains consistent across different types of experimental designs. However, each type possesses its own strengths and weaknesses in terms of validity.

Field experiment is an experimental approach renowned for its capacity to offer a high level of validity, particularly in terms of external validity. Indeed, the credibility of research largely hinges on its validity, with external validity playing a pivotal role in assessing the extent to which the study results can be generalised to other contexts. The field experiment holds an advantage in this regard, as it is conducted in a natural environment rather than a laboratory. In other words, it is a research method that involves manipulating independent variables in a real-world setting (Sen et al., 2006), thus enabling participants to unknowingly participate in a study within authentic environments such as real organisations or online communities. Even when participants are aware that they are participating in the experiment, they engage within a familiar environment and seamlessly integrate into the activities. With this advantage, research adopted field experiment can secure both internal and external validity as it helps to capture participants' natural behaviour.

However, such experiments are relatively rare in business and management studies due to the demanding treatment manipulation and extraneous effects controlling in a field setting (Campbell, 2017). In addition, it can be vulnerable to threats to internal validity, such as confounding variables that may influence the dependent variable (Kardes, 1996). For example, extraneous variables such as participant characteristics, environmental factors, or experimenter biases may influence the results and weaken the internal validity of the study (Campbell, 2017).

3.1.4.2 Laboratory Experiment

Laboratory experiments are conducted in controlled and artificial settings that are designed by the researcher. Because the environment for participants is designed by the researcher, it may limit their ability to accurately replicate real-world conditions, potentially reducing external validity (Adler et al., 1987). However, this type of experiment offers significant advantages in terms of internal validity. The high level of control exerted by researchers over the experimental environment allows for precise manipulation of variables and rigorous

testing of hypotheses. This makes lab experiments well-suited for examining causal relationships between variables.

In detail, lab experiments provide valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms and causal effects of variables under tightly controlled conditions (Adler et al., 1987). The utilisation of laboratory experiment designs in social science research is widespread, particularly for studies aiming to analyse the decision-making process, owing to its significant advantage in establishing cause-and-effect relationships, which are inferred and assumed from the prior literature (Webster and Sell, 2014). Lab experiments also offer the advantage of replicability, as the controlled conditions enable the replication of the experiment to validate the findings. This enhances the reliability of the results and boosts confidence in the research outcomes.

In conclusion, despite researchers' efforts to enhance all types of validity, validity is often associated with trade-offs; thus, researchers can only strive to balance them well. In particular, in the case of experiments, the different settings in which participants are involved constitute significant factors contributing to disparities in validity. In other words, no single type of experiment can perfectly achieve high levels of both internal and external validity. Therefore, the selection of an experiment type should be based on its suitability for the specific research objectives. Given the objective of verifying the predicted impact of independent variables on dependent variables in this thesis, the researcher has chosen to adopt an experimental research design, in particular, lab experiment. The selection of a lab experiment aligns with the primary focus of this thesis, which is to test the direct effects of consumers' subjective knowledge and its interaction effect with the direction of VCLs and CLs. By opting for a lab experiment, this thesis aims to mitigate the influence of unexpected confounding factors from the external environment and enhance internal validity.

3.1.4.2.1 Overall Design of Lab Experiment

The preceding section outlined the selection of a laboratory experiment as the chosen research method for this thesis. In general, a laboratory experiment entails a series of essential steps. According to Chen et al. (2016), first, the researcher introduces deliberate manipulation of the independent variables through the implementation of diverse treatments or conditions. Subsequently, participants are assigned randomly to different treatment levels, ensuring an impartial distribution across the groups. Lastly, the researcher proceeds to observe and measure the resulting outcomes, specifically the dependent variables, with the objective of examining the effects of the treatments on participants' responses.

Despite the systematic process, it is necessary to emphasise that the achievement of the research objectives depends on how well each stage of experimental design is well designed. This encompasses thoughtful considerations in the selection and manipulation of independent variables, the randomised assignment of participants to treatment groups, and the accurate measurement of dependent variables (Lipsey, 1990).

The first factor to consider is the temporal order of presenting the variables to be measured, as it can influence the correlation between assumed independent and dependent variables. Proper sequencing and timing of the treatments and outcome measurements are crucial to capturing accurate and meaningful relationships (Patzner, 1996).

Second, it is essential to address alternative explanations and potential confounding factors in the experimental design (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). By systematically controlling for extraneous variables and ruling out alternative explanations, the internal validity of the study can be enhanced. This helps to establish a more robust causal link between the manipulated treatments and observed effects.

Finally, one advantage of a laboratory experiment design is its ability to control for the spurious effects of extraneous variables. To utilise this appropriately, researchers can isolate the causal relationship and elucidate the true effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables (Myers, 1972). This can be achieved through careful manipulation of the treatments and controlling for other factors when designing the study.

By considering these aspects and designing well, researchers can maximise the advantages of laboratory experiments, namely enhancing internal validity and the reliability and validity of the research results, while minimising potential bias.

Considering the aspects discussed above, this thesis adopts a scenario-based approach as the design of a laboratory experiment. Within this design, participants are presented with carefully crafted hypothetical situations intended to closely resemble realistic contexts. By manipulating specific variables within these scenarios, the researcher aims to observe and analyse participants' behaviour and decision-making processes.

Through this artificial laboratory environment designed by the researcher, this thesis expects to control for extraneous variables while focusing solely on manipulating the variables under investigation. While scenario experiments may not fully capture realistic consumer behaviour, as participants respond based on constructed descriptions of situations rather than actual experiences, this thesis acknowledges the validity of this approach based on the

practices of prominent journals in the marketing field. Leading journals in the field of business and management widely adopt scenario-based experiments, describing their advantage of providing valuable insights into consumer behaviours and decision-making processes within real-life contexts (Xie and Peng, 2009; Geiger et al., 2015; Curth et al., 2016; Letheren et al., 2021).

The final aspect to be discussed is that this study will be conducted online to ensure a well-controlled environment and facilitate easy replicability for future studies. The chosen scenario-based experiment design will help standardise the procedures online, enabling replication by simply modifying the effects of the manipulations being investigated. The subsequent chapter will explain the sampling method, data collection, and study participants used in this thesis, outlining the expected outcomes.

3.1.5 Sampling Methods, Data Collection, and Study Participants

Sampling methods involve the systematic procedures utilised for the selection of a subset of individuals, elements, or units from a larger population (Saunders et al., 2009). This process is essential for drawing inferences or making generalisations about the entire population (Levy and Lemeshow, 2013). There are two distinct paradigms for sample selection in research studies: (a) Random sampling and (b) Non-random sampling.

In *random sampling*, every individual in the population has an equal opportunity to be selected for inclusion in the sample (Saunders et al., 2009). Techniques such as simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, and systematic sampling exemplify this approach (Thompson, 2012). Conversely, *non-random sampling* adopts a deliberate and non-chance-based selection process, wherein participants are chosen based on specific criteria (Saunders et al., 2009). Purposive sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling are instances of this sampling method (Mujere, 2016). Despite the limited generalisability associated with non-random sampling, this thesis employed *convenience sampling*, falling under the non-random sampling due to its merits in facilitating research focus, leveraging the accommodation of specific demographic requirements, enhanced accessibility, and efficiency in terms of cost and time (Etikan et al., 2016).

To enhance the quality and validity of sampling and data collection, a synergistic approach was adopted by integrating two complementary platforms, namely (a) Qualtrics and (b) Prolific. Qualtrics played a pivotal role in study design and participant recruitment, seamlessly intertwining with Prolific.

In detail, *Prolific* is an online panel recruitment platform renowned for streamlining study postings and expediting participant recruitment (Brown-Devlin et al., 2022). *Prolific* primarily utilises convenience sampling; however, it has advantages in that it actively mitigates potential biases associated with non-random sampling by implementing its own mechanisms, thereby promoting a more equitable distribution of study opportunities among participants (Prolific, 2023).

Additionally, this thesis takes advantage of *Prolific*, which creates a comparable environment for online studies for the participants, mirroring the conditions found in traditional laboratory settings. Despite the significant distinctions between laboratory and online testing conditions, a mounting body of evidence suggests that their findings exhibit comparability within the academic realm. Influential studies published in reputable journals such as the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, and *European Journal of Marketing*, as demonstrated by the works of Matherly (2019), Goodman and Paolacci (2017), and Herd et al. (2022), are the evidence of acknowledgment and adoption of such platforms for data collection in the field of marketing research.

Furthermore, individuals recruited through *Prolific* demonstrate a pronounced inclination towards enhanced demographic representativeness in comparison to traditional laboratory samples (Eyal et al, 2021). Indeed, Henry (2008) criticised that a significant sector of academic research relies extensively on the participation of undergraduate students, which leads a demographic cohort typically confined to a limited age range and distinguished by elevated levels of educational achievement. The participant pool in *Prolific* encompasses a broader age spectrum, showcasing varied educational backgrounds and a range of employment experiences (Prolific, 2023). Thus, this thesis anticipated augmenting the overall generalisability and applicability of the research findings of this thesis by using this platform for the sampling.

Although *Prolific* ensures data validity to some extent, securing valid and reliable data ultimately remains the responsibility of researchers themselves. Therefore, the following conditions for participant recruitment across the four studies were applied. To prevent any issues such as confidence or transparency of the submitted response, the three useful functions provided by *Prolific*, (a) approval rate, (b) device, and (c) *Prolific* ID were used. By using the feature of approval rate, participants of this study were limited only for whom has been approved upper bound of the 95% confidence interval of the studies. Also, the type of device was limited for participants to desktop, not mobile or tablet to take study for better

concentration and engagement with the stimuli that this study offers, such as videos and relevantly long written format of stimuli. To avoid multiple participation by one user, the prolific IDs were identified and checked.

Additionally, for practical purposes, only users who can understand English or users from a country where English is the main language were allowed to participate in this study. Therefore, only participants residing in the United Kingdom were allowed to participate in the study. Although there are other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, which use English as their primary language, this study included the people residing in the United Kingdom to eliminate bias that could come from cultural differences. In Chapter 4, comprehensive information about the sample utilised in each of the four studies will be provided within the corresponding sections dedicated to elucidating the particulars of each individual study.

Finally, when researcher designs and distributes surveys and collect and analyse data a platform Qualtrics was used. Qualtrics, a platform which offers the function of interlinking with Prolific, the platform helps to recruit participants. Qualtrics has variety of functions and good quality of user-friendly interface which allows fine customisation such as timers in blocks, skip logic, and randomisation. These capabilities not only reduced bias of samples but also contributed to the enhanced validity of study results. Therefore, the studies were meticulously crafted in Qualtrics, and it was able to access to a high-quality pool of participants and recruit them through Prolific. The better quality and validity of the data were sought by combining these platforms that support each other.

3.1.6 General Analytical Approach

The gathered data underwent diverse statistical analyses to address the research questions of this thesis. The main goal of the statistical analyses in each study, along with the overarching analytical strategy for each study, is as follows. In Study 1, the primary objective is to investigate the direct impact of subjective knowledge on dependent variables, specifically purchase intention and product evaluation. Additionally, the study aims to explore the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity. In order to accomplish the former objective, regression analysis, a predictive modelling technique that explores the cause-and-effect relationship between a dependent variable and independent variable (Rees and Rees, 1989), was employed. The analysis was conducted using the statistical analysis functions integrated into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (hereafter, SPSS) software

(IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29). This software offers comprehensive data analysis, covering descriptive statistics and predictive analysis.

To conduct the moderation test, Hayes PROCESS Macro (model 1) was used using SPSS. PROCESS Macro is a tool for observed variable Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and logistic regression path analysis modelling (Hayes et al., 2017). This thesis utilises the benefits of the PROCESS macro, which offers diverse preprogrammed model templates, demonstrating its user-friendly nature and proficiency in exploring two and three-way interactions within moderation models.

Study 2 seeks to assess the direct influence of subjective knowledge on a distinct dependent variable, namely adoption procrastination. Moreover, Study 2 aims to examine the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity in the different novel product consumption context. Similar to Study 1, regression analysis and Hayes PROCESS Macro (model 1) was used using SPSS for the analyses.

It is important to highlight that, in contrast to Study 1, which employed a single item for measuring subjective knowledge at its preliminary stage, subsequent studies (beginning from Study 2) adopted a more rigorous approach by utilising multiple items (the rationale will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4). To ensure construct validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using SPSS. Additionally, validity assessments included the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity for structural validity. The reliability of the measurements was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha value.

In Study 3, the focus lies in examining the direct impact of subjective knowledge on an alternative dependent variable, namely, product interest. Furthermore, the study endeavours to investigate the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity. Regression analysis was employed to examine the direct effect of subjective knowledge, while for the moderated moderation effect, the study utilised the moderated moderation model (Model 3) offered by the PROCESS macro.

Finally, Study 4 is designed to examine the direct effect of subjective knowledge on the dependent variable, purchase intention. To achieve this, regression analysis was employed. Furthermore, the study aims to test the moderation effect of VCLs at three distinct levels (positive synchronicity, negative synchronicity, and conflict), and the moderated moderation effect of CLs, also at three levels. Hayes PROCESS macro, specifically Model 1, was used to

investigate the moderation effect of VCLs, and Model 3 was applied to explore the moderated moderation effect of CLs.

In addition, Study 4 aims to measure the serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability between subjective knowledge and purchase intention while ruling out the potential mediation effects of anticipated regret, uncertainty avoidance, and conformity tendency in order to eliminate alternative explanations. To test the serial mediation effect involving choice confidence and justifiability between subjective knowledge and purchase intention, Hayes Process Macro Model 6 was employed. In fact, PROCESS macro is advantageous in that it is instrumental in evaluating conditional indirect effects in moderated mediation models featuring single or multiple mediators or moderators (Hayes et al., 2017). With these advantages, this thesis applies this analysis and facilitates the estimation of both direct and indirect effects within single and multiple mediator models, encompassing parallel and serial structures (Hayes et al., 2017). For the elimination of the alternative explanations, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS to investigate the potential mediation effects of anticipated regret, uncertainty avoidance, and conformity tendency.

Finally, in order to comprehensively examine the relationships between variables within the research framework, Hayes Process Macro Model 83 was employed. This model facilitates the analysis of mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation. It is noteworthy that while this model includes moderated moderation effects with mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation analyses, a separate examination of the moderated moderation effect of CLs was conducted using Model 3. This was necessitated by the absence of a macro model that encompasses the entirety of the framework proposed in this thesis. Figure 9 facilitates understanding by visualising the analysis range with colour, depicting the potential analysis coverage of Model 83. Although this section provided a general overview of the analytical approach for each study, the details of the analysis process will be elucidated in the section specifically devoted to each individual study.

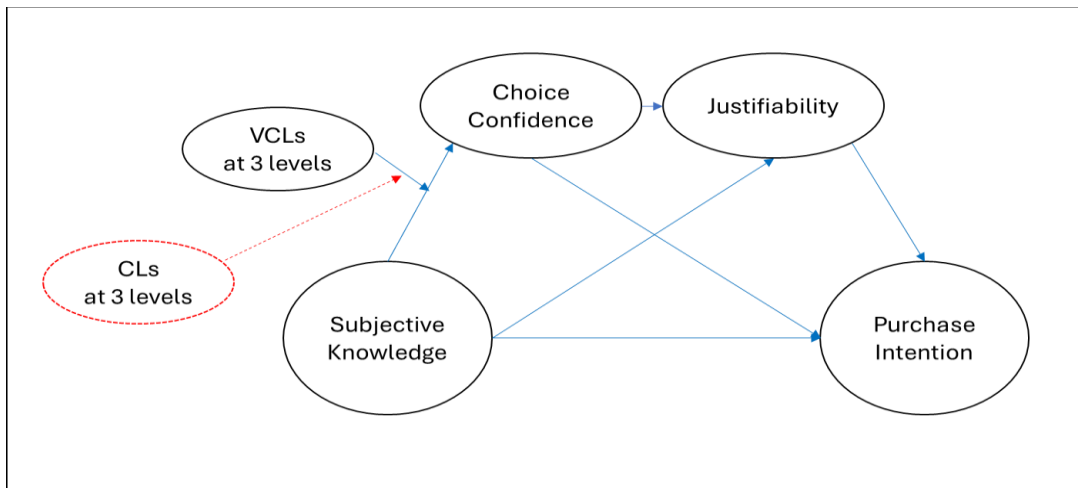


Figure 9 Hayes PROCESS Macro Model 83 Diagram, Indicating the Absence of Moderated Moderation Analysis.

3.1.7 Anticipated Ethical Issues and Ethical Approval Process Undertaken

Throughout the experimental process, deliberate attention was directed towards potential ethical considerations, particularly those frequently mentioned within the domain of marketing research and the context of experimental studies. Drawing from the insights of Tybout and Zaltman (1974), the ethical concerns encompass ensuring informed consent, addressing external pressures from peers, mitigating power differentials between researchers and participants, preventing unequal treatment among participants, and safeguarding privacy concerns.

In order to prevent these issues, meticulous planning of the entire research process was undertaken in alignment with the University Ethics Policy. The policy outlined by the University of Southampton involved creating a thoughtful information and consent form that addressed measures to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality, uphold independence and impartiality, and appropriately store and handle data. The language and expressions within the documentation were carefully crafted in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the University of Southampton. The research plan was subsequently submitted on ERGO II for review by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the University of Southampton. Comprehensive ethics review and approval were obtained to safeguard the well-being of all human participants involved in these studies (ethical approval ID: 78423).

Moreover, the researcher carefully selected the data collection platforms, namely (a) Prolific and (b) Qualtrics, with a keen focus on data protection. Both Prolific and Qualtrics prioritise

data privacy and security. Prolific takes measures to safeguard participants' personal data, while Qualtrics offers various security features to protect researchers' data from unauthorised access. Only after obtaining participants' approval, the studies were commenced, and participants were duly compensated with rewards in alignment with the suggested amount by Prolific. All participants have to be at least 18 years old to be able to complete tasks. Furthermore, participants were actively encouraged to communicate with the researcher for any inquiries or concerns both during and after the studies. They were also encouraged to raise complaints if they identified any concerns, providing them with a means to report any issues observed during the studies.

Chapter 4 Experiments Development and Analysis

Results

This chapter serves as an overview of the upcoming experiments, providing a clear understanding of the study structure within this thesis. Additionally, by summarising the hypotheses proposed in this thesis, this chapter helps establish the blueprint for how the methodological process will be employed to address the research questions at hand. Hypotheses will be examined, and analysis results will be provided.

4.1 Experiment Overview

This section guides readers through the methodology and showcase how the proposed research will unfold. It outlines what and how of the experimental procedures that will be conducted.

Online Experiment 1 (Study 1) serves as a foundational study, shedding light on the influence of consumers' subjective knowledge on their behavioural intentions to consume novel products. Moreover, this initial experiment uncovers the presence of moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products. The findings from this experiment lay the groundwork for the subsequent studies in the thesis.

Building upon the findings of Study 1, Online Experiment 2 (Study 2) aims to reaffirm the observed direct effect of subjective knowledge and moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity, as identified in Study 1. However, Study 2 focuses on a different type of consumption behavioural intention that was not explored in Study 1. This exploration of a broader scope of consumer behaviour contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how predictors influence the formation of various types of consumer behavioural intentions. Furthermore, by employing different examples of novel product consumption scenarios, Study 2 ensures the robustness of the observed effects and accounts for potential interest-based influences.

Building on the insights gained from Study 1 and 2, Online Experiment 3 (Study 3) expands the investigation by examining the direct impact of subjective knowledge on a distinct type of consumer behavioural intention related to a novel product that has not been examined in Study 1 and 2. Study 3 delves deeper into the intricacies of this relationship by exploring the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity alongside VCLs synchronicity. Through

this examination, Study 3 aims to develop a more nuanced understanding of how subjective knowledge, CLs synchronicity, and VCLs synchronicity interact and influence consumer behavioural intentions in context of novel product consumption.

Online Experiment 4 (Study 4) serves as the concluding experimental study in this thesis. Its main objective is to examine the psychological mechanisms that explain how subjective knowledge influences consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. This investigation specifically explores the serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability. Additionally, Study 4 investigates moderated moderation effect of CLs via VCLs encompassing logic synchronicity and conflict with subjective knowledge. In summary, this thesis includes a total of four online experiments, and Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the experimental procedure.

Table 4 Study Structural Overview

Study	IV	DV	Moderator	Mediator	Industrial Context	Sample Size
Study 1	Subjective Knowledge	Purchase Intention Product Evaluation	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)	N/A	Heat Pumps	149
Study 2	Subjective Knowledge	Adoption Procrastination	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)	N/A	Smart Radiator Valves	148
Study 3	Subjective Knowledge	Product Interest	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) * CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)	N/A	Electric Vehicles	206
Study 4	Subjective Knowledge	Purchase Intention	VCLs dynamics (3 levels: Positive Synchronicity vs Negative Synchronicity vs In Conflict) * CLs dynamic (3 levels: Positive Synchronicity vs Negative Synchronicity vs In Conflict)	Choice Confidence Justifiability	Heat Pumps	300

4.1.1 Study 1: The Impact of Consumers' Subjective Knowledge on Purchase Intention and Product Evaluation towards Novel Products Moderated by VCLs Synchronicity

This section describes Study 1 in general including stimuli development, study design, procedures, and analysis results, aimed at investigating the impact of consumers' subjective knowledge on novel products purchase intention and evaluation, and moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive VCLs synchronicity vs negative VCLs synchronicity).

4.1.1.1 Purpose of Study 1

Study 1 aims to investigate the potential direct effect of subjective knowledge and interaction effect of subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity on consumer purchase intention and product evaluation towards a selected novel product.

Overall, this thesis seeks to make a notable contribution by offering empirical insights into the influence of ILs dynamics in different institutional orders on the consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. However, to the best of the knowledge, this thesis is a pioneering attempt to bring the notion of ILs into marketing literature by empirically investigate its impact on consumer behaviour, which has been challenging to capture due to the inherent difficulty in measuring ILs in real-world contexts (Perdue and Summers, 1986). To address this challenge and push the boundaries of both institutional literature and marketing literature, it is aimed to measure VCLs synchronicity through the use of stimuli based on the evidence found in manipulation test.

The manipulation tests will involve the stimuli development of a form of VCLs synchronicity, in the style of news articles. Additionally, the acceptability of heat pumps as a novel product will be assessed by examining the degree of novelty. Following the manipulation tests, Study 1 proceeds to the main test. In the main test, the effect of subjective knowledge will be tested on purchase intention and product evaluation towards heat pumps as powerful indicators denoting the purchase likelihood of consumers in the future (Hui and Zhou, 2002). After the confirmation of the direct effect of subjective knowledge, the moderating effect of VCLs synchronicity on changes in purchase intention and product evaluation towards novel products will be investigated. By employing conditional process model (moderation model) on responses, it is expected to find out whether the effect of subjective knowledge on novel products evaluations and purchase intention is contingent on the different direction of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative). Table 5 shows the details of Study 1.

Table 5 Details of Study 1

Study	Study 1
Design	1(Subjective Knowledge) * 2(positive VCLs Synchronicity vs negative VCLs Synchronicity)
Objective	- Are the heat pumps perceived as novel products? - Manipulation check for the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity - Does positively and negatively synchronised VCLs affect (a) purchase intention and (b) product evaluation?
Stimuli (VCLs Synchronicity)	Positive view on heat pumps from an expert in the area Negative view on heat pumps from an expert in the area
Stimuli (Novel product)	Heat pumps
Stimuli setting	News Article format
Dependent variables	(a) Purchase intention and (b) Product evaluation
Moderator	VCLs synchronicity
Mediator	N/A
Control variables	N/A
Analyses	Frequency distribution analysis Cronbach alpha test Linear regression analysis Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 1)
Key findings	Direct positive main effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention and product evaluation towards novel products Conditional two-way interaction effect (subjective knowledge * negative VCLs synchronicity) on (a) purchase intention and (b) product evaluation towards novel products

The interrelations among the variables under investigation in Study 1 are depicted in Table 6 presented below, along with the corresponding hypotheses formulated for each relationship.

Table 6 Hypotheses of Study 1

	Independent variable	Moderator	Dependent variable	Hypothesis
H1a	Subjective Knowledge		Purchase Intention	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have higher (lower) purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products.
H1b	Subjective Knowledge		Product Evaluation	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will evaluate the corresponding novel products positively (negatively).
H2a	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative)	Purchase Intention	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.
H2b	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative)	Product Evaluation	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the product evaluation of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

Figure 10 visualises the hypotheses that will be examined through Study 1.

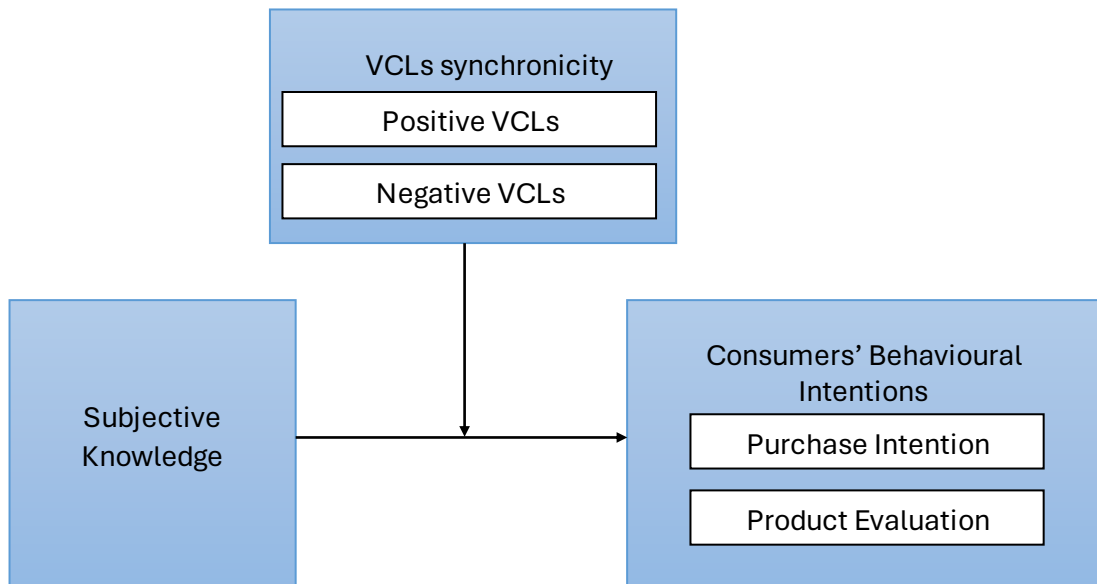


Figure 10 Conceptual Framework of Study 1

4.1.1.2 Study Design and Procedure

This section outlines the design of each study, elucidating the sequence of steps undertaken in Study 1. It incorporates detailed information pertaining to participants and the measurement scales employed in each study.

4.1.1.2.1 Stimuli Development for VCLs Synchronicity

The initial step of Study 1 started with designing stimuli of VCLs synchronicity to examine its moderation effect, that is one of the objectives of Study 1. In Study 1, a style of news article describing a view of a person who is influential and trustful in the field of the novel products is suggested as stimuli of VCLs synchronicity. The validation of using this design drew upon evidence from contemporary marketing research literature and was aligned with the theoretical framework outlined in Thornton et al.'s (2012) institutional order tables, which expound upon the relationships among different institutional orders (as delineated in Table 3 within Section 2.4.3). Section 2.4.3 delved into the concept of community as an institutional order by exploring its norms and strategies. The norm of community as an institutional order arises from collective membership, emphasising the vital role that individuals of honour and elevated status play in accomplishing the communities' objectives. This can be viewed as a strategic manoeuvre aimed at preserving their legitimacy within the interinstitutional system. Moreover, Thornton et al. (2012), in their seminal work on institutional studies, contend that trustworthiness constitutes the cornerstone of legitimacy within a community's institutional framework. Building upon this premise, this thesis was able to identify certain attributes from the marketing literature that symbolise these facets within virtual communities, enabling the perception of them as an institutional order.

For instance, it was found that in the case of YouTube, which serves as an example of a virtual community, attributes such as the number of subscribers (followers) and likes indicate high honour and status within the field of marketing research (Munaro et al., 2021; Tafesse, 2020; Kang and Kim, 2023). These attributes are not only widely recognised as indicators representing influential individuals who can manifest group membership within virtual communities but also signify an individual's honour and trustworthiness within these virtual communities (Tariq et al., 2021). Marketing scholars corroborate that trust in YouTube influencers among their subscribers leads to a heightened likelihood of accepting and believing the information conveyed by these influencers, and this enhances group membership (Xiao et al., 2018a; Xiao et al., 2018b; Kang and Kim, 2023). Similarly, Wojciechowicz (2020) observed the substantial influence of influential airline review vloggers

endorsing airline brands on their subscribers, shaping their intentions to select and utilise those airlines for their travel needs. Various indicators, including the size of a subscriber base and the duration of video content, offer insights into the prevailing sentiment within virtual communities (Pyle et al., 2021). Considering the attributes found in marketing research and their connection with institutional studies addressing the conditions required for communities to be regarded as an institutional order, this thesis embedded these attributes into the stimuli design of the VCLs synchronicity. The stimuli employed in Study 1 for VCLs synchronicity were designed to suggest the perspective of a highly influential and trusted individual within the domain of novel products. This individual is depicted as a YouTuber with a substantial number of subscribers.

Furthermore, Thornton et al. (2012) described reciprocal trust between members as the source of legitimacy that sustains the community as an institutional order (Table 3). To incorporate this aspect into the stimuli design, insights from marketing research were utilised, emphasising the importance of knowledge sharing for fostering reciprocal trust. Indeed, marketing scholars revealed that knowledge sharing among professional individuals in the product area fosters reciprocal trust (Madhavan and Grover, 1998; Chiu et al., 2006; Lin et al., 2009; Chen and Hung, 2010; Ghahtarani et al., 2020).

To illustrate this, a fictional character was introduced in the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity, portraying an influential expert in the field related to heat pumps through written text in an article format (Table 7). In the case of novel products, especially where unified ILs are lacking due to their unfamiliarity, individuals with a reputation in the product area may draw attention to novel products by addressing issues, concerns, and suggestions shared within the community. Consequently, the perspectives and ideas of these people may resonate with recipients, influencing their beliefs in novel products or purchase decisions during interactions. The stimuli of VCLs synchronicity depict a person with over 20 years of working experience and professional knowledge about products. Additionally, the portrayal of the person's engagement with reputable journals was expected to serve as a symbol of the individual's influence and trustworthiness in the product area. In the positive VCLs synchronicity scenario, the person's interview describes their positive outlook on future norms related to heat pumps, while the negative scenario presents the opposite (Table 7).

Table 7 Stimuli Designs of VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)

Positive VCLs synchronicity	<p>David Clinkard is a plumber turned journalist who writes regularly for national newspapers such as the Guardian and the Daily Mail. David is known for his YouTube channel “All about Heat Pump”, with 98 million subscribers, and his expertise in the British building industry.</p> <p>He expects heat pumps are the future saviours that should be taken as serious solutions in terms of many aspects at this emerging stage. David expects the life span of the heat pump to be about 25 years, and it barely costs maintenance. He said, “I worked in the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) field for forty years, and the maintenance and repair of the heat pumps are amazing...unlike the conventional one, once you do get one, you can use almost forever” He holds positive views of heat pumps regarding their noise and government policy, then added, “I’ve been using the heat pump for four years, and it is super quiet as a grave. It was not noisy and was more efficient than the original system. The radiators were relatively smaller than the conventional ones and got warm enough. Moreover, you can actually get paid for the energy you produce by joining the government’s Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme”</p> <p>For those who worry about the energy prices, he said, “instead of keeping your existing gas boiler, change to an amazing heat pump. It will upgrade your home’s energy efficiency and keep it warm.”</p>
Negative VCLs synchronicity	<p>David Clinkard is a plumber turned journalist who writes regularly for national newspapers such as the Guardian and the Daily Mail. David is known for his YouTube channel “All about Heat Pump”, with 98 million subscribers, and his expertise in the British building industry.</p> <p>He expects heat pumps are the passing vogue that can not replace the conventional gas boiler in terms of many aspects at this emerging stage. David expects the life span of the heat pump to be less than a few years and worries about substantial repair costs. He said, “I worked in the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) field for forty years, and heat pumps are a maintenance and repair nightmare...If you do get one, get your chequebook out when it fails”. He holds negative views of heat pumps regarding their noise and government policy, then added, “I had a 4-year battle with my neighbour due to sleepless nights caused by an air source heat pump. It was noisy and was not efficient as the original system. The radiators were very large but never got warm enough. Moreover, the government and the environmentalists don’t like cooling. They think you should open the windows for cooling, so you need endless paperwork to join the government’s Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme and get paid.”</p> <p>For those who worry about the energy prices, he said, “instead of upgrading the thermal efficiency of your home to make it suitable for a wimpy heat pump, upgrade the thermal efficiency of your home to make your existing gas boiler have to burn far less fuel to keep it warm”.</p>

For better ecological validity, the technical aspects of heat pumps were explained, focusing on the advantages and disadvantages of heat pumps, respectively, based on fact-based information found from online searching. To minimise the differences between the stimuli in order to reduce the impact of biases on the results, it was considered to keep the similar length of the paragraphs as much as possible, and it was tried to present opposite views on the same issue.

4.1.1.2.2 Study Distribution and Participants' Characteristics

Study 1 was conducted online, presenting a developed VCLs synchronicity stimuli either positively or negatively framed. In detail, Study 1 brings subjective knowledge as an independent variable, VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) as a moderator, purchase intention and product evaluation as dependent variables.

For Study 1, the data was collected via Prolific on the 15th and 25th of November 2022, respectively. 152 participants with average age of 39.93 residing in the United Kingdom were recruited via Prolific initially but three participants failed the attention check. No one failed memory test. A total of 149 responses were utilised for Study 1. Among these, 97 (65.1%) were from female participants, while 52 (34.9%) were from male participants. Respondents participated in approximately 8 minutes Study 1 and received £7.68 GBP per hour as their monetary rewards. This figure is automatically estimated via Prolific based on their principle of ethical reward that is based on the time spent on the study participation.

After collecting participants consents who voluntarily participated in the study on the condition of financial compensation via Prolific, the purpose of study was briefed when beginning the questionnaire. Respondents were also being told that they will be asked about the heat pump technologies and their attitude towards the product. General information about the research such as researchers' contact, ethical approval (ID: 78423), and guidance about the questionnaire such as notice about the attention check questions were also provided.

4.1.1.2.3 Sequence of Steps for Study 1 and Measurement Scales

Study 1 was designed incorporating both a manipulation test and main test within a single study. In addition, the changes in the dependent variables were measured before and after exposure to the moderator variable, while also controlling for the influence of the independent variable. This design enhances more confidence in establishing causal relationships between variables and assessing the effectiveness of the moderator variable in influencing the dependent variable (Agrawal et al., 2007). Consequently, it helps to establish

causal relationships between the variables and demonstrate the effectiveness of the moderator variable in influencing the dependent variable (Baker, 2000).

In detail, prior to manipulation tests for stimuli, the participants' subjective knowledge of heat pumps was evaluated. This was done to prevent any potential bias in the participants' subjective knowledge resulting from their exposure to explicit information or cues about the level of novelty of the product (MacInnis et al., 1991). The goal was to obtain a pure measure of the participants' subjective knowledge which based solely on their own self-reported understanding or perception of the product.

In Study 1, to measure subjective knowledge, a single item utilised by Magi et al. (2005) was adopted for this research, supported by the endorsement of single-item measures as advocated by Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007) and Henard and Szymanski (2001). Using 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5= very much so), participants were asked to rate their perceived level of knowledge relative to their peers with regard to heat pumps technology (Table 8).

After measuring subjective knowledge, the study enters manipulation test for novel product. A video which introduces about the heat pumps technologies was shown to the participants with duration of 1 minute and 30 seconds (<https://youtu.be/EwWv4vBullI>). The video helps to measure the degree of novelty to check whether heat pumps are acceptable to being used as a novel product in Study 1 (Figure 11).

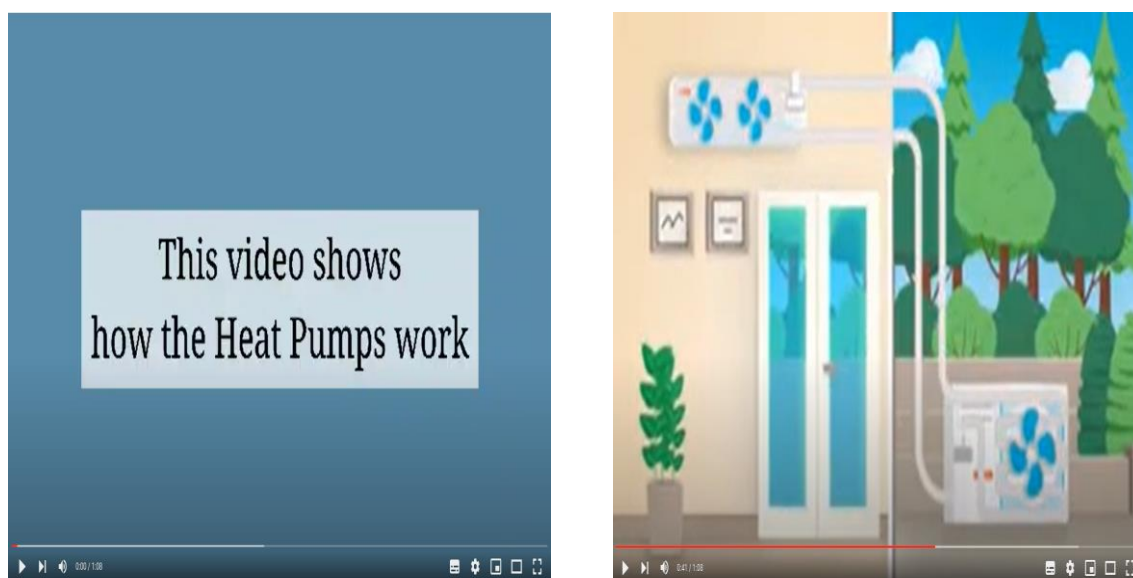


Figure 11 Screenshots of the Video (Heat Pumps)

After the video watching (Figure 11), participants were asked to answer the questions about the degree of novelty on seven-point semantic differential scales with five items including “old/new”, “unoriginal/original”, “common/unusual”, “familiar/novel”, and “typical, atypical”

that are developed by Cox and Cox (2002) (Table 8). After that, designed stimuli of VCLs synchronicity (Table 7) were assigned randomly with equal number of distributions using the function called “evenly present elements” in Qualtrics.

One of the important matters to be mentioned here is the absence of a control group in all online experiments in this thesis including Study 1. Although the control group has been considered as essential for evaluating the effectiveness of a specific treatment or intervention, this study does not include control group with following reasons. The decision has been made under the researcher’s belief in that presence of control group must be in line with the purpose of the research questions of this thesis and the nature of the stimuli being used (McKillip, 1992). As this thesis aims to compare the effectiveness of different treatments, rather than, to determine whether any observed changes or effects are due to the treatment being tested or due to other factor. Therefore, randomising different stimuli to participants is a still valid approach in order to see how the different direction of VCLs synchronicity can be transpired to the direction of the purchase related behavioural intention towards the novel products.

Meanwhile, the fixed timing of 40 seconds was given to participants since the VCLs synchronicity scenarios were presented in written form which requires participants’ concentration for better immersion into the experiment. In addition, memory test was conducted after the presenting the VCLs synchronicity scenarios in order to test whether individuals retain and recall information accurately in order to understand the precise response in result of the stimuli. By detecting and removing the low quality of the response, the study result gains more reliability. In order to examine whether participants have perceived the given VCLs synchronicity scenario as researcher intended, how participants perceived a specific direction of VCLs synchronicity were asked with 7 point-Likert scales (1=extremely negative, 7= extremely positive) (Table 8).

Following the stimulus presentation, participants were instructed to assess Likert scales related to the dependent variables: product evaluation and purchase intention towards the heat pumps. This assessment aimed to gauge whether VCLs synchronicity had influenced their attitudinal responses to heat pumps after exposure to the stimuli (refer to Table 8). To measure product evaluation, a scale adapted from Dodds et al. (1991) was utilised, which included three items assessing participants' general impressions about the products using 7-point bipolar scales ranging from Dislike (1) to Like (7), Unfavourable (1) to Favourable (7), and Negative (1) to Positive (7). For measuring purchase intention, a scale similar to that used in Friedman et al. (2018) was employed, asking participants to rate how likely they

would be to purchase a heat pump using a 7-point Likert scale (1= Extremely Unlikely, 7= Extremely Likely).

The basic sociodemographic information, such as gender, age, education levels, and income has been asked due to its potential interaction in the research model, thus, these variables were used as control variables and then included them as covariates in the further statistical analysis. In the debriefing section, the participants were expressively appreciated for their participation in the studies. Subsequently, the true objective of this study was revealed, including the timing and methodology of the manipulations that were carried out on the participants. Table 8 summarises the comprehensive information about the measurement items, the corresponding scales for each item, and the origins of these scales.

Table 8 Measurements used in Study 1

Variables	Used Items and Scale	Scale based on
Manipulation Test		
Degree of Novelty ($\alpha = 0.817$)	(a) Old-New (b) Unoriginal-Original (c) Common-Unusual (d) Familiar-Novel (e) Typical-Atypical (7-point bipolar scales)	Cox and Cox (2002)
VCLs Synchronicity	In the conversation you just read, what are the views of the people who responded to the question about "Heat Pumps"? (1=Extremely Negative, 7=Extremely Positive)	Author-formulated
Main test		
Independent variable		
Subjective Knowledge	How knowledgeable you think you are in comparison to your peers with regards to Heat Pumps technology? (1=Not at all, 5=Very much so)	Magi et al. (2005)
Dependent variables		
Product Evaluation ($\alpha = 0.986$)	What is your general impression about... (a) Dislike - Like (b) Unfavourable - Favourable (c) Negative - Positive (7-point bipolar scales)	Dodds et al. (1991)
Purchase Intention	How likely would you be to purchase a heat pump? (1=Extremely Unlikely, 7=Extremely Likely)	Friedman et al. (2018)
Sociodemographic (Control variables)		
Age, Gender, Employment, Marital, Education, Income		

4.1.1.2.4 Analysis Methods

Before carrying on the analysis to test hypotheses, in order to establish the validity and reliability of the measures used in Study 1, exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha test were considered, respectively. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is one of the strongest and most commonly used approaches for establishing construct validity, as it helps to identify the underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables (Marsh and Hocevar, 1988). Cronbach alpha test is a widely used method for assessing internal consistency reliability, as it measures the extent to which items in a scale are interrelated and consistent in measuring the same construct (Trizano-Hermosilla and Alvarado, 2016). However, Study 1, which serves as the preliminary stage of the thesis, both the independent and dependent variables had only one indicator (item) in Study 1 although the measurement items were sourced from existing literature, therefore, exploratory factor analysis was deemed inappropriate and was deferred to a later study which employed full scale measurement for constructs. Cronbach alpha test was also deferred for the constructs measured with one item. Only for the two constructs measuring product evaluation, which consisted of three items, and the degree of novelty, which consisted of five items were tested their reliability using Cronbach alpha test. For both constructs, an acceptable reliability threshold $\alpha > 0.7$ based on empirical rules was secured (George and Mallery, 2003) (Table 8).

4.1.1.3 Analysis Results

In this section, analysis results of Study 1 will be reported. The analysis in Study 1 involves testing hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, and H2b through several steps. First, manipulation tests of novel products and the VCLs synchronicity stimuli were conducted through the two manipulation tests. Second, the main effects of subjective knowledge on the two dependent variables, namely purchase intention and product evaluation, are examined. Additionally, the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity is assessed with its conditional effect. All statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.

4.1.1.3.1 Manipulation Test Results 1: Degree of Novelty of Heat Pumps

The analysis to measure the degree of novelty of the heat pumps through the calculation of mean of the 206 responds. The result indicating overall participants understand heat pumps as novel products showing mean value of 5.60 out of the 7-points scale (Table 9). As it surpassed the median, it was confirmed that heat pumps represent novel products.

Table 9 Frequency Analysis Results of the Degree of Novelty for Heat Pumps

Novel Product	Mean of Each item					Overall Mean
	Old (1): New (7)	Unoriginal (1): Original (7)	Common (1): Unusual (7)	Familiar (1): Novel (7)	Typical (1): Atypical (7)	
Heat Pumps	6.04	5.83	5.44	5.36	5.34	5.60

4.1.1.3.2 Manipulation Test Results 2: VCLs Synchronicity

To evaluate the manipulation of VCLs synchronicity stimuli and ascertain participants' understanding of these stimuli as intended, participants were asked about their perceptions regarding a specified direction of VCL synchronicity (Table 8). Responses were collected on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (indicating extremely negative) to 7 (indicating extremely positive). The mean responses were manually calculated, and the responses were categorised into two groups: negatively synced VCLs (scores 1-3) and positively synced VCLs (scores 5-7). Among 149 of total participants, 73 of participants who were presented with the negative scenario exhibited an average mean response of 2.11, while 76 participants those exposed to the positive scenario demonstrated a mean response of 4.37. These analysis results provide support for the efficacy of the selected stimuli, presented in the format of news articles, in eliciting different interpretations of VCLs synchronicity among participants (positive VCLs synchronicity vs negative VCLs synchronicity). This validation of the manipulation used in Study 1 sets the stage for subsequent research.

4.1.1.3.3 Main Test Analysis Results 1: Direct Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Purchase Intention and Product Evaluation

The analysis in this section aims to test hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 1b, examining the potential linear relationship under the assumption that is, the higher level of subjective knowledge can positively affect consumers' purchase intention (H1a) and product evaluation (H1b) towards the novel products.

The Impact of Subjective Knowledge on Purchase Intention and Product Evaluation

To evaluate assumed relationship between continuous dependent variables, (a) purchase intention and (b) product evaluation, and a continuous independent variable, subjective knowledge, linear regression analyses were performed assuming a linear relationship between them. The regression model showed the direct effect of subjective knowledge was

significant on both purchase intention ($b=0.207$ $p=0.011$) and product evaluation ($b=0.211$ $p=0.010$) (Table 10).

Table 10 Linear Regression Analysis Results of Study 1

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig
		B	Std.Error	Beta		
Purchase Intention	Subjective Knowledge	.315	.123	.207	2.562	.011
Product Evaluation	Subjective Knowledge	.421	.161	.211	2.615	.010

4.1.1.3.4 Main Test Analysis Results 2: Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention and Product Evaluation towards Novel Products

For the final step of Study 1, this section aims to provide preliminary evidence for the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention and product evaluation towards the novel product, testing hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b. To achieve this, the interaction effect of subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity on the two dependent variables were examined. For both dependent variables, (a) purchase intention and (b) product evaluation, a moderated regression analysis was conducted separately on the same samples of 149 responses, using two predictor variables subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity. For moderated regression analysis, Hayes process macro model 1 (Hayes, 2015) was used.

The Interaction Effect of Subjective Knowledge and VCLs Synchronicity on Purchase Intention

From the process macro model 1 conducted, the estimation of the model showed a significant interaction effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator VCLs synchronicity on purchase intention ($\beta=-.408$; $se=.104$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.613; -.203]$, $p=.000$). The post-hoc analysis result examining the conditional effects of subjective knowledge on purchase intention at different directions of VCLs synchronicity revealed a significant conditional effect for negative VCLs synchronicity ($\beta=.696$, $se=.153$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [.393; .998]$, $p<.001$) while non-significant conditional effect for positive VCLs

synchronicity ($\beta = -.120$, $se = .141$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.398; .157]$, $p = .393$). Additionally, the result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that there is a significant direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention ($\beta = .288$; $p = .006$) providing additional evidence to support the findings of the previously conducted linear regression analysis. Furthermore, the improved model fit from the inclusion of bootstrap analysis enhanced the validity of the linear regression findings and lends further support to the conclusions drawn from the original analysis ($R = .580$, $R\text{-sq} = .337$, $MSE = 1.420$, $p < .001$).

The Interaction Effect of Subjective Knowledge and VCLs Synchronicity on Product Evaluation

The process macro model 1 (Hayes, 2015) was employed and the results indicated interactive effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator positive VCLs synchronicity on product evaluation ($\beta = -.441$; $se = .122$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.682; -.200]$, $p = 0.000$). The conditional effects of subjective knowledge on product evaluation at different directions of VCLs synchronicity revealed a significant conditional effect for negative VCLs synchronicity ($\beta = .794$, $se = .180$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [.439; 1.149]$, $p < .001$) while non-significant conditional effect for positive VCLs synchronicity ($\beta = -.089$, $se = .165$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.415; .238]$, $p = .592$). Similar to the analysis on purchase intention, a direct effect of subjective knowledge on product evaluation were enhanced after using 5000 bootstrap samples ($\beta = .353$; $p = 0.004$) with better model fit ($R = .683$, $R\text{-sq} = .466$, $MSE = 1.957$, $p < .001$). Table 11 summarised the results and comprehensive results of Study 1 is suggested in Table 12.

Table 11 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) on Purchase Intention and Product Evaluation in Study 1

Outcome variables	Positive VCLs Synchronicity	Negative VCLs Synchronicity
Purchase Intention	<i>Non Significant</i>	Significant (+)
Product Evaluation	<i>Non Significant</i>	Significant (+)

Table 12 Comprehensive Results Summary of Study 1

		Path		Direct Effect	Moderators	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect
H1a	Subjective Knowledge (SK)	→	Purchase Intention	Significant (+)				
H1b	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Evaluation	Significant (+)		SK	Significant (+)	
H2a	Subjective Knowledge	→	Purchase Intention		VCLs Synchronicity	SK* VCLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	Negative VCLs synchronicity (+)
H2b	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Evaluation		VCLs Synchronicity	SK* VCLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	Negative VCLs synchronicity (+)
Hypothesis				Result				
H1a	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have higher (lower) purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products.			Accepted				
H1b	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will evaluate the corresponding novel products positively (negatively).			Accepted				
H2a	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.			Partially Accepted				
H2b	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the product evaluation of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.			Partially Accepted				

4.1.1.4 Findings

Overall, H1a and H1b were supported through Study 1, suggesting the existence of direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention and product evaluation towards novel products. Study 2 supported H2a and H2b as well but partially, showing positive conditional moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity on purchase intention and product evaluation, only for negative VCLs synchronicity.

This suggests that the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge level and purchase intention and product evaluation is dependent on the direction of VCLs synchronicity, especially, when consumers face the negatively synced ILs towards the novel products within virtual communities. In other words, the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge level and purchase intention or product evaluation is dependent on the valence of the negative ILs in virtual community, and consumers with higher knowledge levels may be more likely to make a purchase in response to negative conversation compared to those with lower subjective knowledge levels.

Interesting finding is that, despite the presence of negatively dominant ILs in the virtual communities, consumers with higher subjective knowledge are more likely to have an increased purchase intention and positively evaluate novel products. This finding highlights the importance of subjective knowledge as a mitigating factor in the face of negative ILs in virtual communities, indicating that consumers who possess higher subjective knowledge may be more resilient to negative VCLs and more open to evaluating and purchasing novel products. This may be interpreted in such a way that consumers who believe themselves are knowledgeable for the products tend to resist the influence of negative opinions and make independent judgments based on their own perceived knowledge about the products that is in line with the discussion in previous research (Hidalgo-Baz et al., 2017).

In contrast, the result showed that positive VCLs synchronicity does not affect consumers behavioural intention. This means that a negative conversation may be more effective in motivating purchase behavioural intention among consumers with higher knowledge levels but not for a positive conversation. This suggests that marketer may need to leverage the role of consumers' subjective knowledge in shaping consumers' perceptions and intentions differently when they target consumers with different level of subjective knowledge.

In summary, the findings in Study 1 were further strengthened the argument that there is a direct effect of subjective knowledge and moderating effect of VCLs synchronicity through obtaining the significance from both purchase intention and product evaluation towards

novel products, the two variables which are closely related to consumer purchase behavioral intention. However, Study 1 leaves limitations as it adopted small scale to measure subjective knowledge rather than full scale, and only one example of novel products and one format of VCLs synchronicity were employed yet as it is a preliminary stage of the studies. To bolster the findings of Study 1 and strengthen the argument in this thesis, the next section presents supplementary experiments addressing certain limitations in Study 1.

4.1.2 Study 2: The Impact of Consumers' Subjective Knowledge on Novel Products Adoption Procrastination Moderated by VCLs Synchronicity

This section outlines the general process of Study 2 including stimuli development, study design, procedures, and analysis results, followed by Study 1. Study 2 aims to further strengthen the direct effect of consumers' subjective knowledge and moderating effect of negative VCLs synchronicity on their consumption behavioural intention by testing same mechanism tested in Study 1 but builds upon with the different experimental environment with changes of measurement scale, product type, and dependent variable.

4.1.2.1 Purpose of Study 2

In the previous section, it was established that there is a direct effect of subjective knowledge and conditional interaction effect of VCLs synchronicity on purchase intention and product evaluation using the consumption context of heat pumps through Study 1.

The primary objective of Study 2 is to reconfirm the direct effect of subjective knowledge and moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity on the relationship between subjective knowledge and adoption procrastination, in the modified experimental environment. Several elements such as product type and the stimuli design of VCLs synchronicity will be suggested in Study 2. Indeed, adoption of a new format of stimuli enhances the validity of the results since the adjustment of the stimuli format can facilitate the control of potential confounding variables (Duncan and Northoff, 2013). For instance, the manipulation of font or colour in written text can minimise the impact of visual stimuli on perception (Eidels et al., 2010; Beier and Oderkerk, 2019). Additionally, the manipulation of different stimuli format can increase the generalisability of the study findings, demonstrating their relevance across multiple formats and their potential applicability in real-world situations where stimuli are presented in diverse formats (Barry et al., 2014). Consequently, adopting the changed design of stimuli for measuring the same variable in an experiment enhances ecological validity and external validity of the research, making stimuli more reflective of real-world situations.

Considering these advantages, Study 2 will introduce smart radiator valves as a different product with its own degree of novelty. Through the manipulation test, its acceptability as a novel product will be examined. By verifying the replication of findings from Study 1 in Study 2, the robust evidence supporting the relationships of the variables will be furnished.

The manipulation tests will encompass the creation of stimuli portraying VCLs synchronicity, presented in the form of online forum threads. Given the multifaceted nature of ILs, which can be discerned across diverse channels than confined to a singular component, the intention is to adapt a new design of stimuli. This adaptation allows to capture the intricate nature of ILs, thereby enhancing the comprehension of VCLs synchronicity and its impacts. These manipulation tests will involve a fresh participant group, randomly selected for Study 2.

Subsequently, this study seeks to reevaluate the direct effect of subjective knowledge and the interaction effect between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity on the variable of adoption procrastination towards smart radiator valves. By examining various types of behaviours related to purchase, this study aims to facilitate the generalisation of the effects of predictors on consumer behaviour within a novel product consumption context. Finally, unlike Study 1 that used small scale to measure independent variable and dependent variables, Study 2 adopts full-scale measurements for measuring constructs as the study progresses further. This attempt will enable robust statistical analysis, thereby enhance the confidence in the research results. Table 13 shows the details of Study 2.

Table 13 Details of Study 2

Study	Study 2
Design	1(Subjective Knowledge) * 2(positive VCLs Synchronicity vs negative VCLs Synchronicity)
Objective	Are the smart radiator valves perceived as novel products? Manipulation checks for the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity. Does positively and negatively synchronised VCLs affect adoption procrastination towards novel products?
Stimuli (VCLs Synchronicity)	Positive views on smart radiator valves between members in online forum thread Negative views on smart radiator valves between members in online forum thread
Stimuli (Novel products)	Smart Radiator Valves
Stimuli setting	Online Forum Thread
Dependent variables	Adoption Procrastination
Moderator	VCLs Synchronicity
Mediator	N/A
Control variables	N/A
Analyses	Frequency distribution analysis Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test Bartlett's test of sphericity Cronbach alpha test Exploratory Factor Analysis Linear regression analysis Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 1)
Key findings	Direct negative main effect of subjective knowledge on adoption procrastination towards novel products. Conditional two-way interaction effect (subjective knowledge * positive VCLs synchronicity) on adoption procrastination towards novel products.

Table 14 shows the interrelations among the variables under investigation in Study 2 with the corresponding hypotheses that will be tested.

Table 14 Hypotheses of Study 2

	Independent variable	Moderator	Mediator	Dependent variable	Hypothesis
H1c	Subjective Knowledge			Adoption Procrastination	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be less (more) likely to procrastinate the adoption of the corresponding novel products.
H2c	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative)		Adoption Procrastination	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the adoption procrastination of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will decrease (increase) adoption procrastination.

Figure 12 shows a schematic diagram of hypothesis 1c and hypothesis 2c.

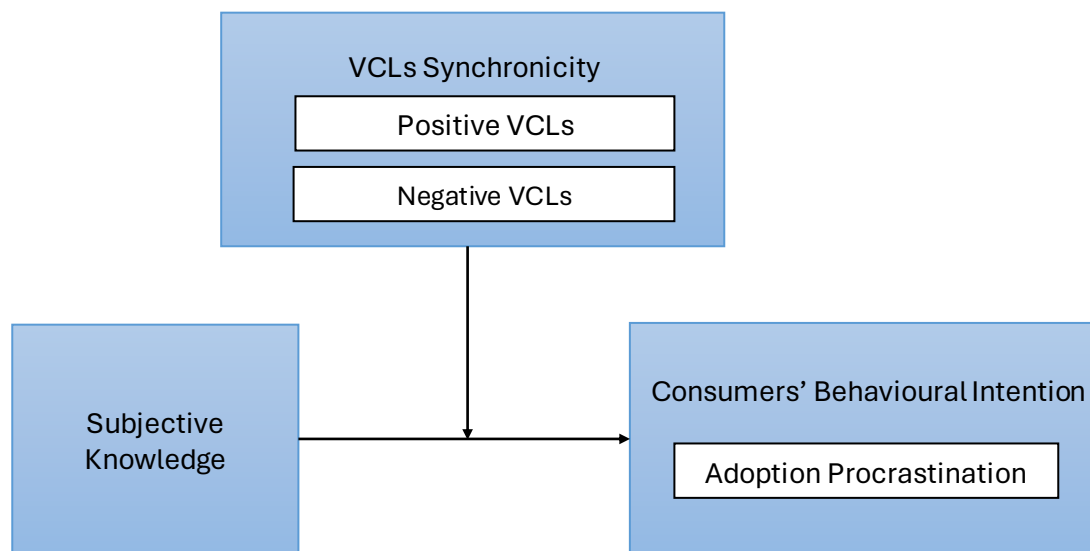


Figure 12 Conceptual Framework of Study 2

4.1.2.2 Study Design and Procedure

This section delineates the structure of Study 2, providing a clear description of the procedural steps taken. It includes comprehensive details about the participants involved and the measurement scales utilised in each study.

4.1.2.2.1 Stimuli Development for VCLs Synchronicity

Prior to the Study 2, stimuli of VCLs synchronicity were designed. In this thesis, VCLs stimuli in style of a forum thread is believed as an effective design in eliciting the anticipated responses towards smart radiator valves. This belief is justified by the notion that a sense of coherence can be fostered among forum members while they engage in discussions, share their experiences, ideas, and perspectives on a specific product in the forum (Rogers, 2000; Barak et al., 2008). As members actively or less actively contribute to the discussion, they may come to feel that their contributions are valued and that they are part of a community of individuals who share their interests and concerns (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Through this interactive process, a shared sense of meaning and purpose towards novel products can emerge, influenced by the dominant ILs prevalent within the virtual communities. This common understanding can assist individuals in better comprehending their own cognition and behaviour related to the product under discussion. Accordingly, the thesis proposes using a forum thread-like format as the stimuli for VCLs synchronicity, by presenting the dominant ILs converging to one side within the virtual community members' prevailing evaluation and purchase intention related to consumption.

In the scenario, communication between the three forum users in an online forum was shown. The first user seeks opinion about smart radiator valves, then the second and third users show positively consistent (positive VCLs synchronicity) or negatively consistent opinions of the product (negative VCLs synchronicity), respectively.

For better ecological validity, first, the forum banner was brought from the existing forum, and the product type and forum were matched. The actual thread that shows VCLs synchronicity is captured from the actual online forum networking on smart radiator valves, "Plumber's forums", <https://www.plumbersforums.net/>). The length and content of the thread were modified for the practical reasons, and the numerous online expressions such as slang, and personal history descriptions were excluded since the independent effect of the predictor may be contaminated by these factors. The focus of the conversation was brought from the topic that was actually discussed in the forum, and to give an impression of the objectiveness rather than the design of the products, the technological aspects of the

product was chosen as the topic. Additionally, the length of each member's comments was kept similar across the three scenarios and between the members, and the same usernames were used across the different scenarios. By presenting the stimuli in this manner, the research aims to investigate how the VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) impact the formation of shared meanings, consensus, and divergences within the virtual community regarding the novel products.

Second, the thread design, the location of the user icon, and the username were inserted in the scenarios according to the design used by majority online forums. The forum member's username with their own opinion and the banner, user icons, community names, and background colours of existing online forums were included in the stimuli. In order to avoid evoking additional unwanted effects for the attitude formation towards the product from the username, the usernames have been randomly chosen at the free webpage of neutral username generator online (<https://nordpass.com/username-generator/>). The same usernames were used across the two different directions of VCLs synchronicity scenarios. Additionally, indicators of member's ranking were described as well similar with what actual forums are doing. This ranking function also shows which members of the forum are influential, which was intended to be used as a clue to the study participants to accept the opinions of the ranked members within the conversation as the dominant VCLs of the product. Figure 13 shows the designed stimuli, and they are applied in Study 2 to manipulate the VCLs synchronicity.

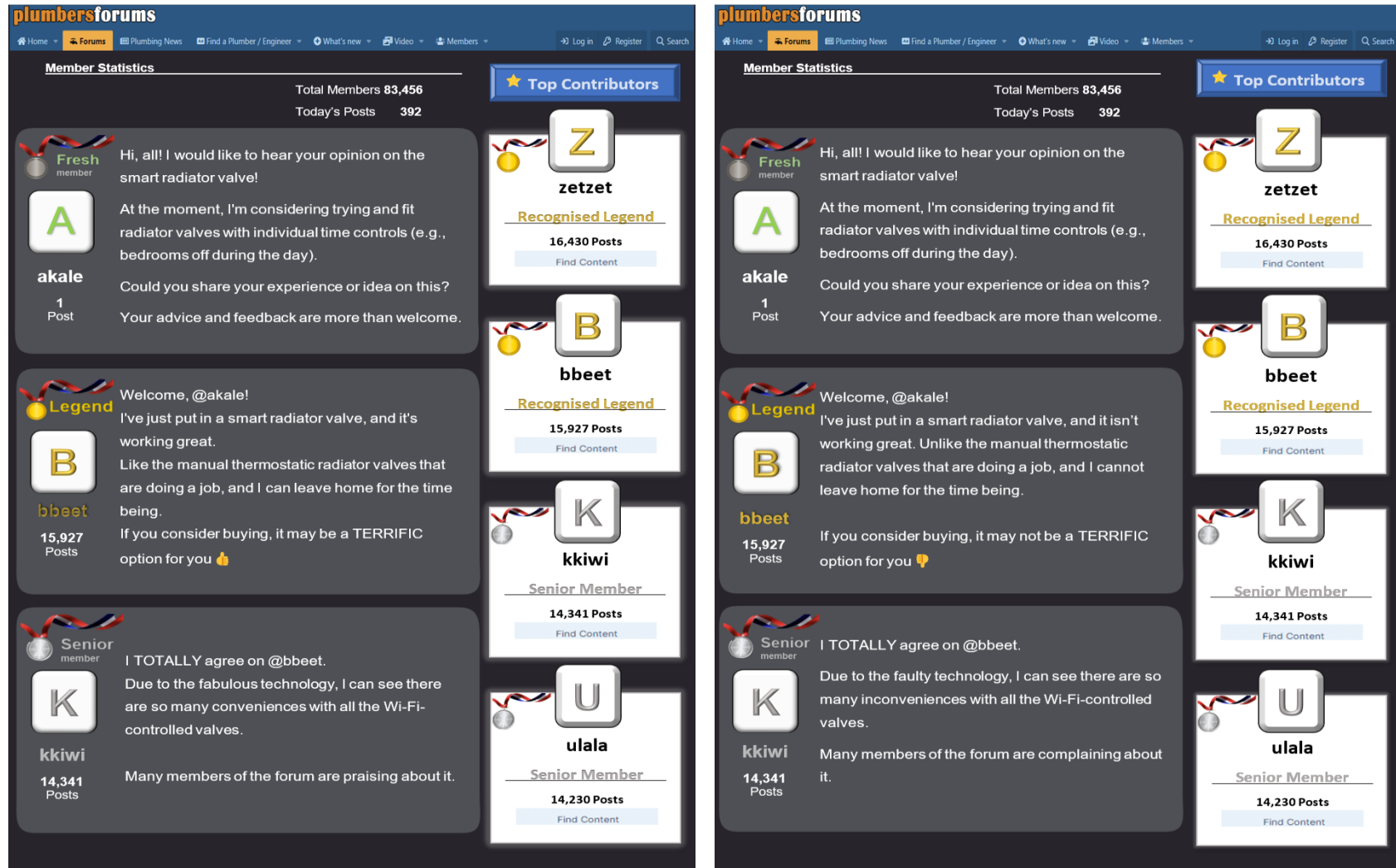


Figure 13 Stimuli of Positive and Negative VCLs Synchronicity in Context of Smart Radiator Valves

4.1.2.2.2 Study Distribution and Participants' Characteristics

The overall procedure of Study 2 and the requirement or characteristic of the study participants were the same as in Study 1. The survey designed in Qualtrics was spread out through Prolific, and it was reached out to 160 participants residing in the United Kingdom on the 23rd and 25th of November 2022, respectively. In total 12 participants were failed the attention checks, and everyone passed memory test. Consequently, a total of 148 responses were eventually included for Study 2. These responses comprised 80 (54.05%) from female participants, 67 (45.27%) from male participants, and 1 (0.68%) from participants identifying as the third gender. The average age of the participants was 40.72. Respondents spent approximately 5.39 minutes on Study 2, and they received a monetary reward of £7.96 GBP per hour for their participation.

Before the participants joined the study, the purpose of study was briefed to them, and it was told that they will be asked about the smart radiator valves technologies and their attitude towards the product. General information about the research, ethical approval (ID: 78423), and guidance about the attention check questions were suggested as well with the asking their consent to study participation.

4.1.2.2.3 Sequence of Steps for Study 2 and Measurement Scales

The design of Study 2 follows a one-factor between-subjects design with a moderator with subjective knowledge as an independent variable and VCLs synchronicity as the moderator variable. The study was carried out online, presenting a developed VCLs synchronicity stimuli either positively or negatively framed same as in Study 1 but with different design.

In total, 148 of respondents were initially asked about their subjective knowledge of the smart radiator valves followed by a manipulation check of the smart radiator valves as novel products and VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative). As the study progresses and being more confident about the further studies, more sophisticated scales were included in this study to improve the precision of the measurement of subjective knowledge (Table 15). By adopting full-scale measurements of subjective knowledge developed by Beatty and Talpade (1994) and Flynn and Goldsmith (1999) that are dominantly used, more validity and reliability of the measurements were secured compared to Study 1.

Then, a video explaining the smart radiator valves technology was shown for the manipulation check for smart radiator valves (<https://youtu.be/87kp663lygc>) (Figure 14).

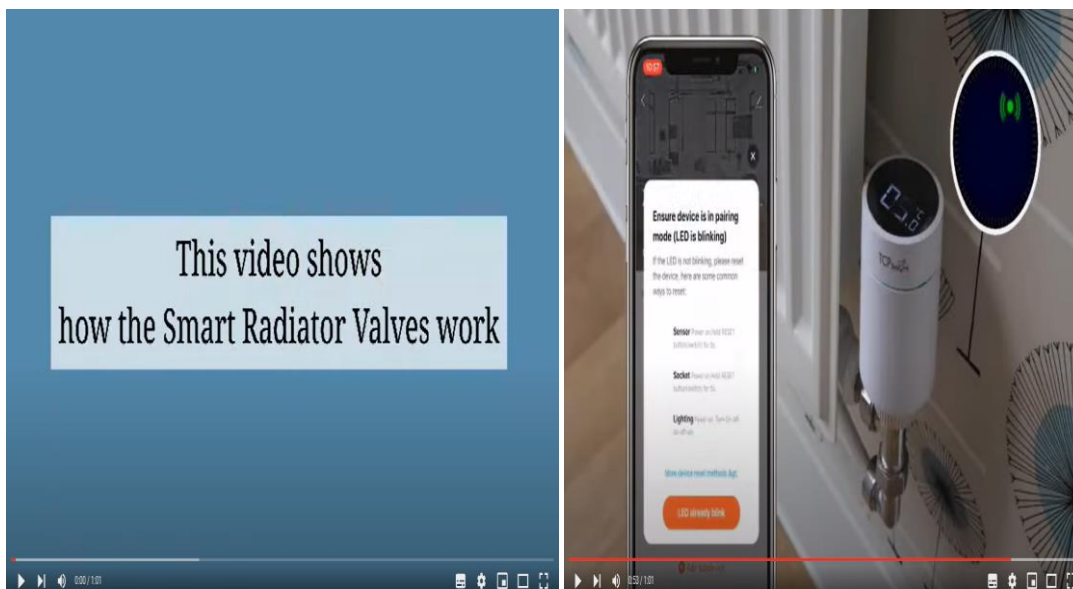


Figure 14 Screenshots of the Video (Smart Radiator Valves)

To make the conditions between the experiments as identical as possible, the given video was presented at approximately the same time as the video used in Study 1. As the product type changed, the described technology and image changed, but the product description method was presented almost similarly by focusing on the technology of the product to not to infuse any bias to understand the product. After the video watching, participants were asked to answer the questions about the degree of novelty developed by Cox and Cox (2002). This procedure described above so far belongs to the manipulation test examining smart radiator valves are suitable to be considered as novel products in order to be used in the remainder of the study.

Next, in order to examine whether the certain direction of VCLs synchronicity has been transpired to participants' attitude towards smart radiator valves after they were exposed to the stimuli, the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity in style of online forum thread were assigned to participants' randomly with equal number of distributions. After the 40 seconds of reading the given scenario, participants went through the memory test and were asked about how they viewed the stimuli (1=extremely negative, 7= extremely positive) and their tendency of adoption procrastination for smart radiator valves. In order to measure adoption procrastination, a measurement with two items was used. It was developed arbitrarily by the researcher based on the work of Zanjani et al. (2016) and Xiao and Spanjol (2021) with a seven-point scale was used (Table 15). After the basic sociodemographic information was asked, the participants were debriefed the true objective of this study, with thanking message.

Table 15 contains comprehensive information about the measurement items, the corresponding scales for each item, and the origins of these scales. The next section further details the analysis methods used in Study 2.

Table 15 Measurements used in Study 2

Variables	Used Items and Scale	Scale based on
Manipulation Test		
Degree of Novelty ($\alpha = .788$)	(a) Old-New (b) Unoriginal-Original (c) Common-Unusual (d) Familiar-Novel (e) Typical-Atypical (7-point bipolar scales)	Cox and Cox (2002)
VCLs Synchronicity	In the conversation you just read, what are the views of the people who responded to the question about "Smart Radiator Valves"? (1=extremely negative, 7= extremely positive)	Author-formulated
Main test		
Independent variable		
Subjective Knowledge ($\alpha = .854$)	(a) I know a lot about Smart Radiator Valves technology. (b) I do not feel very knowledgeable about Smart Radiator Valves technology. (reverse scored) (c) Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on Smart Radiator Valves technology. (d) Compared to most other people, I know less about Smart Radiator Valves technology. (reverse scored) (e) When it comes to Smart Radiator Valves technology, I really don't know a lot. (reverse scored) (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)	Beatty and Talpade (1994) and Flynn and Goldsmith (1999)
Dependent variable		
Adoption Procrastination ($\alpha = .834$)	(a) I think that Smart Radiator Valves are acceptable, but I will not use it. (b) I think Smart Radiator Valves are useful, but I will not use a Smart Radiator Valves for now. (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)	Arbitrary developed measurements based on Zanjani et al. (2016) and Xiao and Spanjol (2021)
Sociodemographic		
Age, Gender, Employment, Marital, Education, Income		

4.1.2.2.4 Analysis Methods

Before carrying on the analysis to test hypotheses, the reliability using Cronbach alpha test was conducted for each construct that is used in Study 2. All the three constructs measuring degree of novelty, subjective knowledge, and adoption procrastination showed an acceptable reliability threshold $\alpha > 0.7$ based on empirical rules was secured (George and Mallery, 2003) (Table 15). The reliability test confirmed the measurements used in Study 2 measured attribute consistently what it is supposed to measure using Cronbach alpha test (Trizano-Hermosilla and Alvarado, 2016). A validity test was also carried out to ensure structural validity. This test assessed whether the data adequately reflected the dimensionality of the construct being measured and whether the assumptions proposed in this study were supported by substantial correlations present in the data. The former is tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. KMO test allows measure sampling adequacy, furthermore, confirm the suitability of the data for factor analysis that test construct validity (Bloch et al., 2003). The latter is tested using Bartlett's test of sphericity, a test examining the null hypothesis of the variables in the population correlation matrix are uncorrelated (Bearden et al., 2001). These two tests indicate the robustness of the correlation patterns identified in the data, and the results suggest existence of distinct and reliable components to the measures in the data (Arceo et al., 2018). After that, EFA was conducted to secure construct validity measuring whether variables reflect what it is supposed to measure (Marsh and Hocevar, 1988). The analysis results indicated that to the quality of the measurements were satisfied showing a KMO value over 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974), a significance level for the Bartlett's test below 0.05, and Cronbach alpha values over 0.7 for all variables tested in Study 1. The results confirmed the construct validity. The results are summarised in Table 16.

Table 16 Measurement Validity and Reliability Test Results of Study 2

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.777	
Approx. Chi-Square		469.732	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	21	
	Sig.	<.001	
Exploratory Factor Analysis	Eigenvalues	Number of items	EFA loading
Subjective Knowledge	3.479	5	0.676-0.890
Adoption Procrastination	1.500	2	0.902-0.927

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax

4.1.2.3 Analysis Results

This section presents the analysis results of Study 2. The analysis in Study 2 proceeded in the following order: (a) manipulation tests of stimuli (the degree of novelty for smart radiator valves and VCLs synchronicity), (b) examination of the direct effect of subjective knowledge on adoption procrastination, and (c) investigation of the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity and its conditional effect.

4.1.2.3.1 Manipulation Test Results 1: Degree of Novelty of Smart Radiator Valves

Through the frequency distribution analysis on the 148 responds, it was able to identify the highest- and lowest-scoring for the degree of novelty for the smart radiator valves. The results suggest that participants, on average, perceive smart radiator valves as novel products, with a mean score of 5.71 on a 7-point scale. This mean score exceeds the median value, confirming that smart radiator valves are perceived as novel products by the participants. Thus, it was confirmed that smart radiator valves represent novel products, and it can be used in the remaining Study 2.

Table 17 Frequency Analysis Results of the Degree of Novelty for Smart Radiator Valves

Novel Product	Mean of Each item					Overall Mean
	Old (1): New (7)	Unoriginal (1): Original (7)	Common (1): Unusual (7)	Familiar (1): Novel (7)	Typical (1): Atypical (7)	
Smart Radiator Valves	6.49	5.92	5.34	5.49	5.30	5.71

4.1.2.3.2 Manipulation Test Results 2: VCLs Synchronicity

In this manipulation test, participants were queried about their perceptions regarding a direction of VCL synchronicity using a seven-point scale (Table 15). The average responses were computed manually, and the responses were classified into two categories: negatively synchronised VCLs, encompassing scores 1-3, and positively synchronised VCLs, comprising scores 5-7. Out of a total of 148 participants, 73 participants exposed to the negative scenario displayed an average mean response of 1.83, while the 78 participants exposed to the positive scenario exhibited a mean response of 6.82. Therefore, these analysis results provide strong support for the effectiveness of the selected stimuli as they successfully elicited different interpretations of VCLs synchronicity among participants. This validation of the manipulation employed in Study 2 lays the foundation for subsequent research.

4.1.2.3.3 Main Test Analysis Results 1: Direct Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Adoption Procrastination

The analysis in this section aims to test hypothesis 1c, examining the potential linear relationship under the assumption that is, the higher level of subjective knowledge can negatively affect consumers' adoption procrastination towards the novel products.

The Impact of Subjective Knowledge on Adoption Procrastination

To assess the assumed relationship between the continuous dependent variable of adoption procrastination and the continuous independent variable of subjective knowledge, linear regression analyses were conducted. The linear regression model accounted for that subjective knowledge is a significant predictor of the adoption procrastination ($b = -.270$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the subjective knowledge has a negative relationship with adoption procrastination, supported hypothesis 1c.

Table 18 Linear Regression Analysis Results of Study 2

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig
		B	Std.Error	Beta		
Adoption Procrastination	Subjective Knowledge	-.301	.089	-.270	-3.393	<.001

4.1.2.3.4 Main Test Analysis Results 2: Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Adoption Procrastination towards Novel Products

Finally, this section aims to provide stronger evidence for the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity on the relationship between subjective knowledge and adoption procrastination towards novel products by exploring the interaction effect of subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) on adoption procrastination towards the novel products, testing hypothesis 2c.

The Interaction Effect of Subjective Knowledge and VCLs Synchronicity on Adoption Procrastination

A moderated regression analysis was conducted with 148 observations to predict adoption procrastination using two predictor variables subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity by using Hayes process macro model 1. From the process macro model 1 conducted, the estimation of the model showed a significant interactive effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator VCLs synchronicity on adoption procrastination ($\beta = -.200$; $se = .088$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.373; -.027]$, $p = 0.024$). The post-hoc analysis result examining the conditional effects of subjective knowledge on adoption procrastination at different direction of VCLs synchronicity revealed a significant conditional effect for positive VCLs synchronicity ($\beta = -.490$, $se = .121$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.730; -.250]$, $p < .001$) while non-significant conditional effect for negative VCLs synchronicity ($\beta = -.091$, $se = .126$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.340; .158]$, $p = .470$). Table 19 summarised the results.

Table 19 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) on Adoption Procrastination in Study 2

Outcome variables	Positive VCLs Synchronicity	Negative VCLs Synchronicity
Adoption Procrastination	Significant (-)	Non-Significant

Additionally, the result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that there is a significant direct effect of subjective knowledge on adoption procrastination ($\beta = -.291$; $p = 0.001$) in line with the result of the linear regression analysis previously conducted. Finally, the inclusion of bootstrap analysis resulted in an improved model fit, indicating that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R = .335$, $R\text{-sq} = .112$, $MSE = 1.569$, $p = .001$). The results indicated a significant overall relationship between the predictor variable subjective knowledge and the outcome variable adoption procrastination, and there is a significant conditional interaction effect between subjective knowledge and positive VCLs synchronicity. The overall results are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20 Comprehensive Results Summary of Study 2

	Path	Direct Effect	Moderator	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect
H1c	Subjective Knowledge (SK) → Adoption Procrastination	Significant (-)				
H2c	Subjective Knowledge → Adoption Procrastination		VCLs Synchronicity	SK* VCLs Synchronicity	Significant(-)	Positive VCLs synchronicity (-)
	Hypothesis	Result				
H1c	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be less (more) likely to procrastinate the adoption of the corresponding novel products.	Accepted				
H2c	The effect of consumer subjective knowledge on the adoption procrastination of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will decrease (increase) adoption procrastination.	Partially Accepted				

4.1.2.4 Findings

The results of Study 2 provided further support for the direct effect of subjective knowledge, as well as the conditional interaction effect of VCLs synchronicity on adoption procrastination, supporting H1c and partially supporting H2c, respectively. Specifically, subjective knowledge was found to have a negative effect on adoption procrastination, indicating that higher levels of subjective knowledge were associated with lower levels of procrastination in the context of consumption decisions for novel products.

Furthermore, in Study 2, it was found that the interaction effect of subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity on adoption procrastination was only significant in case of positive synchronicity. This is in contrast to the positive conditional interaction effect of subjective knowledge and negative VCLs synchronicity on purchase intention and product evaluation observed in Study 1. The difference in findings may be attributed to the meanings of the dependent variables used in the two studies. Purchase intention and product evaluation reflect positive perspectives while adoption procrastination has negative perspectives from marketers' point of view. In detail, the higher levels of purchase intention and positive product evaluation are typically beneficial for marketers as they are indicative of potential sales and positive consumer perceptions. On the other hand, higher level of adoption

procrastination, which infers delayed or avoided consumption decisions, may negatively impact marketers' profits as it can hinder consumers' purchasing behavior.

Considering this, the results of Study 2 helps marketers suggesting that consumers with high levels of subjective knowledge may be more effective in managing consumers' negative attitudes towards novel products when consumers perceive a positive sense of alignment around the novel products within the virtual community. In other words, when positive VCLs are dominant, consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be less likely to exhibit negative consumption behavioral intentions such as adoption procrastination. These results provide a much richer insight into consumer behaviour in novel product consumption contexts, as they allow predictors to predict not only positive but also negative indicators of consumer behavioural intention.

Comprehensively, the combination of findings from Study 1 and Study 2 indicates that negative VCLs synchronicity may be effective in enhancing positive consumption behavioral intentions among consumers with higher subjective knowledge, while positive VCLs synchronicity may be helpful in attenuating negative consumption behavioral intentions among consumers with higher subjective knowledge.

From the two experiments conducted so far, the significance of considering the interplay between consumers' subjective knowledge, virtual community dynamics, and consumer's purchase behavioural intentions towards novel products was emphasised. The importance of considering the role of VCLs synchronicity in the relationship between subjective knowledge and consumption behavioural intentions towards novel products provides insight into how marketing manager should manage and cultivate a sense of alignment about their products in virtual community, when they target the consumers who have different level of subjective knowledge.

Building on the direct effect of subjective knowledge and the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity that were reaffirmed in Study 2, Study 3 seeks to further explore and add more complexity to the relationships under investigation.

4.1.3 Study 3: The Impact of Consumers' Subjective Knowledge on Novel Products Interest Moderated by CLs Synchronicity through VCLs Synchronicity

This section introduces the general process of Study 3 including stimuli development, study design, procedures, and analysis results, followed by Study 1 and Study 2. Study 3 aims to further strengthen the direct effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on consumption behavioral intention towards novel products. Additionally, in this section, the general process of Study 3 will be outlined aiming to add complexity to the research model that has become more robust through the results gained from Study 1 and Study 2. It examines the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity and moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity.

4.1.3.1 Purpose of Study 3

In the previous section, it was established that subjective knowledge has a direct effect on consumers' behavioural intentions and the VCLs synchronicity has a conditional interaction effect in different types of novel product consumption contexts.

However, in reality, there are additional interventions that can influence consumers' behavioural intentions, especially for novel products. As such products are relatively unfamiliar to the consumers, consumers tend to pay more attention to corporations' movements, such as product release plan and strategies, in order to assess whether the market is likely to experience a shift or not as discussed in Section 2.10. Therefore, Study 3 starts with the belief during the time when consumers face the mixture of aligned or non-aligned VCLs and CLs towards novel products, it will affect consumers' attitudinal responses or behavioural intentions towards such products. By adding more complexity to the research model by bringing and testing one more variable, namely, CLs synchronicity, Study 3 aims to find out the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity in guiding consumer behavioural intention towards novel products.

In Study 3, stimuli for measuring CLs synchronicity will be developed first. The design of stimuli for VCLs synchronicity will be changed, following the approach used in Study 1 and Study 2, under the belief that this change in stimuli design will yield several benefits such as improved ecological validity, external validity, and robustness of the research findings as it allows for systematic variation of stimuli parameters, such as intensity, duration, or complexity (Ulrich et al., 2006).

In addition, Study 3 aims to understand the interaction effect of subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity on one of the indicators of consumer behavioral

intention, that is, product interest, which has not been explored in the two previous studies of this thesis. By examining various types of consumption behavioural intentions, this study aims to facilitate the generalisation of the effects of predictors on consumer behavioural intentions within a novel product context.

Finally, Study 3 aims to validate and strengthen the study result with a different product context by assessing the relationship between variables with electric vehicles, which was not used in Study 1 and Study 2. In general, this section describes the procedures and analysis results of Study 3, achieving the objectives defined below sequentially. The detailed information of Study 3 is suggested in Table 21.

Table 21 Details of Study 3

Study	Study 3
Design	1(Subjective Knowledge) * 2(positive VCLs synchronicity vs negative VCLs synchronicity) * 2 (positive CLs synchronicity vs negative CLs synchronicity) Are the electric vehicles perceived as novel products? Manipulation checks for the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity. Manipulation checks for the stimuli of CLs synchronicity.
Objective	Does positively and negatively synchronised VCLs affect product interest towards novel products? Does positively and negatively synchronised CLs affect product interest towards novel products through VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative)?
Stimuli 1 (VCLs Synchronicity)	Positive views on electric vehicles in an influential YouTube Channel Negative views on electric vehicles in an influential YouTube Channel
Stimuli 2 (CLs synchronicity)	Positive views on electric vehicles from CEO in the vehicle market Negative views on electric vehicles from CEO in the vehicle market
Stimuli (Novel products)	Electric Vehicles
Stimuli setting	YouTube channel (VCLs synchronicity) News articles (CLs synchronicity)
Dependent variables	Product Interest
Moderator	VCLs synchronicity
Moderated Moderator	CLs synchronicity
Mediator	N/A
Control variables	N/A
Analyses	Frequency distribution analysis Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test Bartlett's test of sphericity Cronbach alpha test Inter-item correlation test Exploratory Factor Analysis Linear regression analysis Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 1) Moderated Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 3)
Key findings	Positive direct effect of subjective knowledge on product interest towards novel products Conditional three-way interaction effect (subjective knowledge * VCLs synchronicity* CLs synchronicity) on product interest towards novel products

Table 22 presents interrelations among the variables that will be tested in Study 3 with the corresponding hypotheses formulated for each relationship. Figure 15 visualises the two hypotheses, H1d and H4a.

Table 22 Hypotheses of Study 3

	Independent variable	Moderator 1	Moderator 2	Dependent variable	Hypothesis
H1d	Subjective Knowledge			Product Interest	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be more (less) interested in the corresponding novel products.
H4a	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (positive vs negative)	CLs Synchronicity (positive vs negative)	Product Interest	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and product interest related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

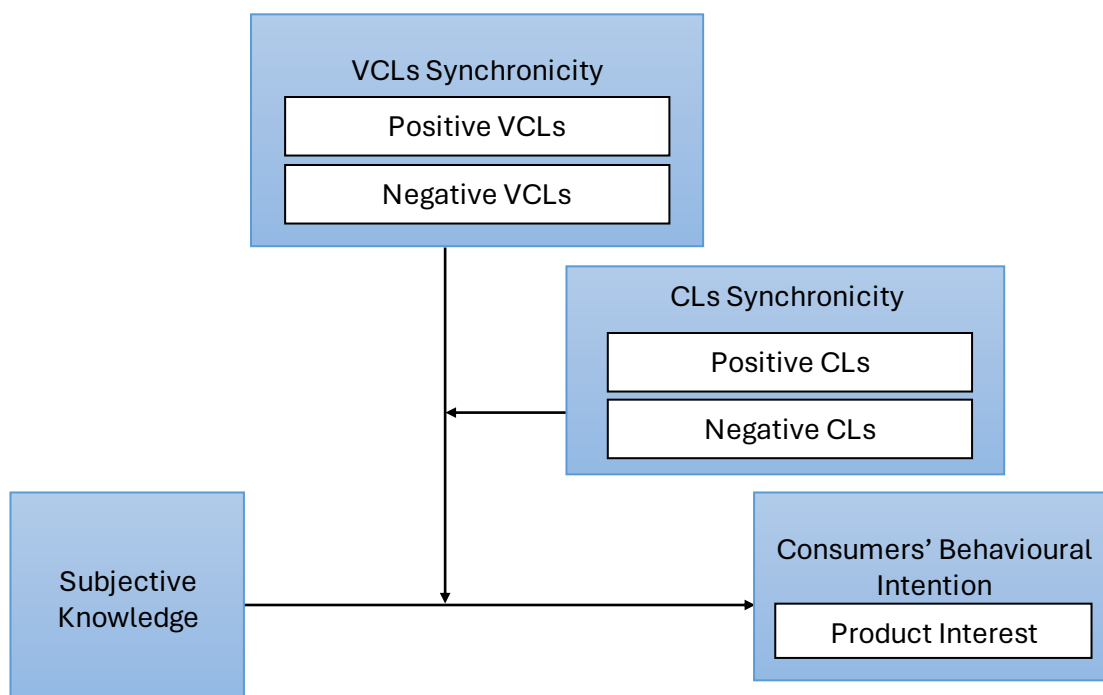


Figure 15 Conceptual Framework of Study 3

4.1.3.2 Study Design and Procedure

This section provides an overview of the design for each study, offering the specific steps taken during the course of Study 3. It encompasses detailed information regarding participants and the measurement scales employed in the respective studies.

4.1.3.2.1 Stimuli Development for VCLs Synchronicity

Prior to the Study 3, the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity were developed with new design and CLs synchronicity based on theoretical consideration. Same approaches used in Study 1 and Study 2, specific formats and expressions were deliberated based on definition and information collected through literature reviews to not only construct stimuli that imply and represent the exact meaning of each variable, but also present stimuli that naturally fit the research context presented to participants.

For Study 3, view of influential YouTuber was suggested as stimuli of VCLs synchronicity with the belief that it can foster a sense of coherence (Halpern and Gibbs, 2013), showing a certain direction of dominant logics. Especially, the environment of YouTube that is represented as a virtual community and the most influential platforms in the digital age (Arceo et al., 2018). It provides a place to share experiences, ideas, and perspectives on a particular topic between subscribers or viewers of the YouTube channel and YouTuber (Dehghani et al., 2016). Moreover, influential YouTubers not only develop loyal followers of viewers who share their interests and perspectives but also create a sense of community and connection. This reflects that they can create dominant logics around novel products by drawing attention from the viewers (Lee and Lee, 2022). With reasons above, for the VCLs synchronicity stimuli, a format of YouTube channel was adopted.

In the design, as YouTuber's influence is often manifested in the number of subscribers, views, and likes (Munaro et al., 2021; Tafesse, 2020; Tariq et al., 2021; Kang and Kim, 2023), these features were illustrated in the stimuli. These features not only imply the YouTuber's influence and trustiness but also offers vividness and realism into the stimuli as discussed earlier in Study 2. Finally, the comment of the YouTuber under the thumbnails and the graph in the thumbnails also helps study participants to make inferences of the direction of logic around the electric vehicles intuitively (Schneider et al., 2013; Lee and Abu-El-Haija, 2017). The stimuli designed in Figure 16 will be applied in Study 3 to manipulate the VCLs synchronicity after confirming its effect through manipulation test.



447,291,341 views Premiered on 19 Nov 2022

Over the past 5 years, I have driven more than 70 different electric vehicles. What I LOVE about EVs? Well, this video shows the realities of driving an EV.

At this stage, EVs are the future saviours I think and they should be taken as a serious solution for the future of transport! For those who are considering to get one, it is good time to change!



447,291,341 views Premiered on 19 Nov 2022

Over the past 5 years, I have driven more than 70 different electric vehicles. What HATE about EVs? Well, this video shows the realities of driving an EV.

At this stage, EVs are just a fad I think and they should NOT be taken as a serious solution for the future of transport! For those who are considering to get one, it is NOT a good time to change!

Figure 16 Stimuli of Positive and Negative VCLs Synchronicity in Context of Electric Vehicles

4.1.3.2.2 Stimuli Development for CLs Synchronicity

According to the earlier discussion in Section 2.4.2, the foundational belief and principle that defines the purpose and goals of the corporations as an institutional order comes from the market position of the firm. In addition, Table 2 in Section 2.4.2 explains that the institutional authority of the corporations comes from the board of directors. It also tends to increase its size and diversification as an approach or strategy to be positioned as an institutional order within a society (Table 2). Considering these aspects, the stimuli of CLs synchronicity is designed in the form of a news article by quoting a current and future strategy said by fictional CEO in addition to containing a signal to guess the company's high status in the current market (Table 23).

In the case of positive CLs synchronicity, it was described that the company would positively evaluate and support the future value of the suggested product, and vice versa in the case of negative CLs synchronicity (Table 23). To enhance the realism for better manipulation, some of the contents such as the government plan and the technical aspect of the products were brought from the factual information when it designed.

Table 23 Stimuli Designs of CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)

Positive CLs synchronicity	<p>One of the leading automobile brands in the UK has announced that it will launch Electric Vehicles (eVs) as part of its new 'Power of Choice' plan. It aims to sell more than 7 million EVs by the end of 2030. The automaker plans to invest £100m in the UK's first EV & training centre in the coming year, where they build innovations that create even more efficient EVs. The company is also aiming to train 1,000 EV engine engineers and 300 geospatial analysts (double the current UK capacity).</p> <p>A company spokesperson said, "Battery-electric vehicles are just going to take over the market soon. We pledge to offer the widest possible array of EVs. We aim to make our EVs the unbeatable opponents of the current petrol-powered vehicles."</p>
Negative CLs synchronicity	<p>One of the leading automobile brands in the UK has announced that it will launch new brand of petrol vehicles as part of its new 'Power of Choice' plan. It aims to sell more than 7 million of these vehicles by the end of 2030. The automaker plans to invest £100m in the UK's first training centre in the coming year, where they build innovations that create even more efficient petrol cars. The company is also aiming to train 1,000 engine engineers and 300 geospatial analysts (double the current UK capacity).</p> <p>A company spokesperson said, "Battery-electric vehicles are just going to take longer than the media would like us to believe. We pledge to offer the widest possible array petrol cars. We aim to make our petrol cars the unbeatable opponents of the recent hype of electric vehicles."</p>

4.1.3.2.3 Study Distribution and Participants Characteristics

The survey was designed in Qualtrics and spread out through Prolific, and it was reached out to 213 participants residing in the United Kingdom on the 6th of December 2022, respectively. A total of 7 participants failed the attention checks. Consequently, 206 responses were utilised for Study 3, including 100 (48.54%) from female participants, 105 (50.97%) from male participants, and 1 (0.49%) from participants identifying as the third gender. The average age of participants was 41. Respondents participated in approximately 7.53 minutes Study 3 and received £9 GBP per hour as their monetary rewards.

Before the participants joined the study, the purpose of study was briefed for them, and it was told that they will be asked about the electric vehicle's technologies and their attitude towards the products. General information about the research, ethical approval (ID: 78423), and guidance about the attention check questions were suggested as well with the asking their consent to study participation.

4.1.3.2.4 Sequence of Steps for Study 3 and Measurement Scales

Study 3 adopted the experimental design same as in Study 1 and Study 2 having benefits of conducting both a manipulation checks and test the effect of treatment in one experiment (Agrawal et al., 2007). The overall procedure of Study 3 and the requirement or characteristic of the study participants were the same as that of Study 1 and Study 2, while the design of the stimuli has changed to YouTube format to measure the effect of VCLs synchronicity, and news article format was borrowed to measure CLs synchronicity. The context of the response has changed to electric vehicles, and the dependent variable has changed to product interest.

In total, 206 of respondents were initially asked about their subjective knowledge of the electric vehicles followed by a manipulation check of the electric vehicles as novel products and VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative). As same as in Study 2, full scale measurement of subjective knowledge developed by Beatty and Talpade (1994), Flynn and Goldsmith (1999) were borrowed. Then, a video explaining the electric vehicles technology was shown for the manipulation check for Electric Vehicles (<https://youtu.be/7pYEC89Lq5E>). (Figure 17)

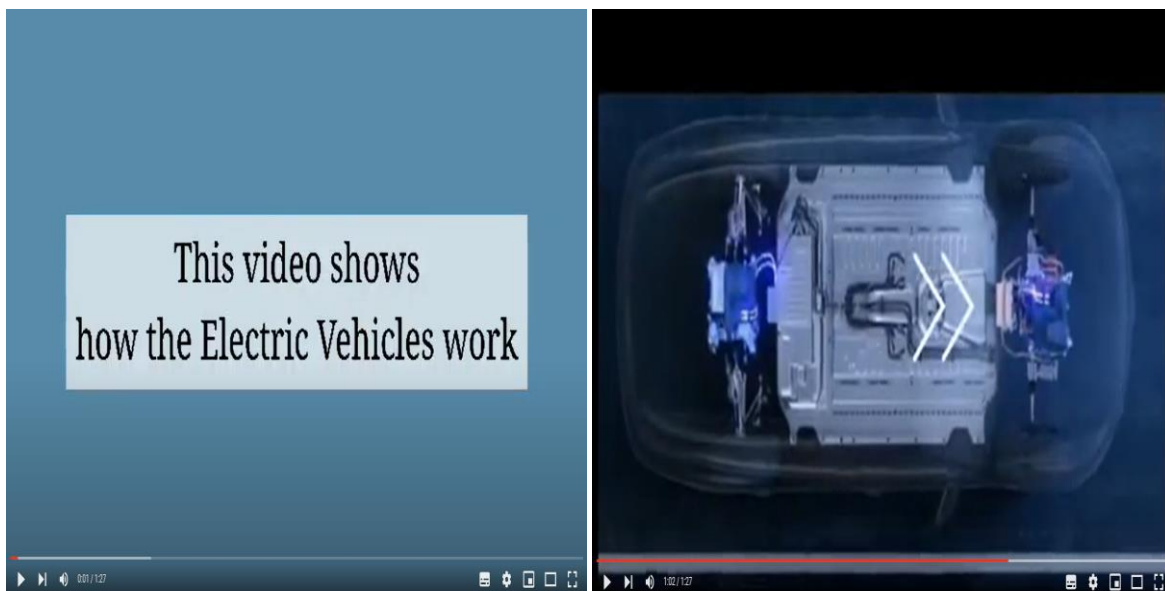


Figure 17 Screenshots of the Video (Electric Vehicles)

To make the conditions between the experiments as identical as possible, the given video was presented at approximately the same time as the video used in Study 1 and Study 2. In addition, as the product type changed, the described technology and image changed, but the product description method was presented almost similarly by focusing on the technology of the product.

After the video watching, participants were asked to answer the questions about the degree of novelty developed by Cox and Cox (2002). This procedure described above so far belongs to the manipulation test examining electric vehicles are appropriate to be considered as novel products in order to be used in the remainder of the study.

After that, the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity in style of YouTube channel (Figure 16) and the stimuli of CLs synchronicity in style of news article (Table 23) was assigned randomly with equal number of distributions. As a result, some respondents received either positively or negatively synchronised VCLs stimuli first, followed by CLs synchronicity stimuli either positively or negatively synchronised, while others received the stimuli in the reverse order (vice versa), resulting in varied exposure sequences for different respondents (Bower, 1961). Participants were asked to how they perceived the given VCLs synchronicity and CLs scenario with 7 point-Likert scales (1=extremely negative, 7= extremely positive).

Following the manipulation test of both VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity, participants were asked about their interest in electric vehicles in order to test the interaction effect of the different direction of VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity on product interest towards novel products. The product interest was measured borrowing a scale

suggested in De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) with seven-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

As the number of stimuli were increased, more time were given for reading the given scenario. Participants went through the memory test and attention test that are embedded in the test. The sociodemographic information has been asked as a final step with debriefing of the true objective of this study and thanking message.

Each item of the measurements can be found in Table 24 below. The next sections report the analysis method used in Study 3 and the analysis results.

Table 24 Measurements used in Study 3

Variables	Used Items and Scale	Scale based on
Manipulation Test		
Degree of Novelty ($\alpha = .724$)	(a) Old-New (b) Unoriginal-Original (c) Common-Unusual (d) Familiar-Novel (e) Typical-Atypical (7-point bipolar scales)	Cox and Cox (2002)
VCLs Synchronicity	In David Clinkard's view you just read in the screenshot of his YouTube video, what is his general views on "Electric Vehicles"? (1=Extremely Negative, 7= Extremely Positive)	Author-formulated
CLs Synchronicity	In the article you just read, what are the views of the automobile brand about "Electric Vehicles"? (1=Extremely Negative, 7= Extremely Positive)	Author-formulated
Main test		
Independent variable		
Subjective Knowledge ($\alpha = .869$)	(a) I know a lot about Electric Vehicles technology. (b) I do not feel very knowledgeable about Electric Vehicles technology. (reverse scored) (c) Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on Electric Vehicles technology. (d) Compared to most other people, I know less about Electric Vehicles technology. (reverse scored) (e) When it comes to Electric Vehicles technology, I really don't know a lot. (reverse scored) (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)	Beatty and Talpade (1994); Flynn and Goldsmith (1999)
Dependent variable		
Product Interest ($\alpha = .574$; inter-item correlation coefficient=.404)	(a) My interest in Electric Vehicles has decreased. (reverse scored) (b) I am interested in Electric Vehicles. (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)	De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007)
Sociodemographic		
Age, Gender, Employment, Marital, Education, Income		

4.1.3.2.5 Analysis Methods

First, KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted to secure the structural validity. Next, EFA and Cronbach alpha test were conducted to secure construct validity and reliability of the measurement, respectively. For subjective knowledge Cronbach alpha values showed over 0.7 but for product interest it showed close to 0.6. Although Cronbach alpha values was quite low but the result of inter-item correlation test, examining the extent to which items on a scale are related to scores on all other items in the measurement scales, showed 0.404 within the ideal mean range between 0.2 and 0.5 (Swerdlik and Cohen, 2005). Therefore, the measurement of product interest was kept in this study. The analysis results indicated that to the quality of the measurements were satisfied showing a KMO value over 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974), a significance level for the Bartlett's test below 0.05. Through the results, it was able to confirm the construct validity. The results are combined in Table 25.

Table 25 Measurements Validity and Reliability Test Results of Study 3

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.835
	Approx. Chi-Square		595.055
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df		21
	Sig.		<.001
Exploratory Factor Analysis	Eigenvalues	Number of items	EFA loading
Subjective Knowledge	3.555	5	0.693-0.895
Product Interest	1.223	2	0.639-0.837

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax

4.1.3.3 Analysis Results

In this section, the analysis results of Study 3 are presented. An explanation of the analysis methods employed to achieve the objectives of the study. The analysis in Study 3 proceeded in the following order: (a) manipulation tests of stimuli (the degree of novelty for electric vehicles, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity) through manipulation test, (b) examination of the direct effect of subjective knowledge on product interest, and (c) investigation of the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity and its conditional effect.

4.1.3.3.1 Manipulation Test Results 1: Degree of Novelty of Electric Vehicles

The analysis to measure the degree of novelty of the electric vehicles was conducted through the mean of the 206 responds. The results reveal that, on the whole, participants have a reasonably good understanding of electric vehicles as novel products, with an average score of 5.49 on a 7-point scale (Table 26). This mean score surpasses the median value, providing confirmation that electric vehicles are indeed perceived as novel products by the participants.

Table 26 Frequency Analysis Results of the Degree of Novelty for Electric Vehicles

Novel Product	Mean of Each item					Overall Mean
Electric Vehicles	Old (1): New (7)	Unoriginal (1): Original (7)	Common (1): Unusual (7)	Familiar (1): Novel (7)	Typical (1): Atypical (7)	5.49
	6.46	5.86	4.96	5.11	5.08	

4.1.3.3.2 Manipulation Test Results 2: VCLs Synchronicity

To evaluate the effectiveness of the manipulation of VCLs synchronicity stimuli and assess whether participants understood these stimuli as intended (refer to Table 23 and 24), the mean of responses was manually calculated. In this manipulation test, a seven-point scale was used to categorise responses into two groups: negatively synced VCLs (scores 1-3) and positively synced VCLs (scores 5-7). Out of a total of 206 participants, 102 participants exposed to the negative scenario displayed an average mean response of 1.5, while the 104 participants exposed to the positive scenario exhibited a mean response of 6.83. Therefore, these analysis results strongly support the effectiveness of the selected stimuli, as they successfully elicited different interpretations of VCLs synchronicity among participants. This analysis result validates the use of these stimuli in the subsequent parts of Study 3.

4.1.3.3.3 Manipulation Test Results 3: CLs Synchronicity

In a manner similar to the manipulation test of VCLs synchronicity mentioned earlier, the mean responses were manually calculated for the manipulation test of CLs synchronicity. During this manipulation test, participants were prompted to select a response on a seven-point scale to articulate their perceptions concerning a predetermined direction of CLs synchronicity post the stimuli presentation. The collected responses were then grouped into two categories: negatively synced CLs, represented by scores 1-3, and positively synced CLs, encompassing scores 5-7. Out of a total of 206 participants, 102 participants exposed to the negative scenario displayed an average mean response of 3.07, while the 104 participants exposed to the positive scenario exhibited a mean response of 6.72. Therefore, these

analysis results strongly support the effectiveness of the selected stimuli, as they successfully evoked different interpretations of CLs synchronicity among participants. These results indicate that the chosen stimuli were validated to be used in the remaining parts of Study 3.

4.1.3.3.4 Main Test Analysis Results 1: Direct Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Product Interest

The analysis in this section aims to test Hypothesis 1d, testing the potential linear relationship drawn under the assumption that is, the higher level of subjective knowledge can positively affect consumers' interest towards the novel products.

4.1.3.3.5 Main Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Product Interest

To assess the assumed linear relationship between the product interest and subjective knowledge, that are continuous variables, linear regression analyses were conducted with the assumption of a linear relationship between the variables (Table 27). The regression model shows a statistically significant relationship between the subjective knowledge and the product interest ($b=.308$, $p<.001$).

Table 27 Linear Regression Analysis Results of Study 3

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig
		B	Std.Error	Beta		
Product Interest	Subjective Knowledge	.334	.072	.308	4.619	<.001

4.1.3.3.6 Main Test Analysis Results 2: Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity through VCLs Synchronicity with on Product Interest towards Novel Products

In the previous studies (Study 1 and Study 2), it was established that there is a conditional interaction effect between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity on different types of behavioral intentions towards novel products, such as purchase intention, product evaluation, and adoption procrastination. This section reports the test results of the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity through VCLs synchronicity between subjective knowledge and the product interest, testing hypothesis 4a.

The Interaction Effect of Subjective Knowledge, VCLs Synchronicity, and CLs Synchronicity on Product Interest

A moderated moderation analysis was conducted with 206 observations using model 3 developed by Hayes (2015). The analysis included four predictor variables (subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, CLs synchronicity, and their interactions) and the outcome variable (product interest).

The analysis result strengthens the positive direct effect of subjective knowledge on behavioural intention by showing significance on product interest ($\beta=.304$; $se=.071$, CI 95 %=[.164; .443], $p=0.000$). Furthermore, the result using 5000 bootstrap samples revealed that the model was statistically significant, indicating that the model as a whole was able to explain a significant amount of variance in the outcome variable ($R=.417$, $R\text{-sq}=.174$, $MSE=1.292$, $p<.001$). This suggests that the current model, which includes CLs synchronicity, provides a better model fit to the data compared to the results obtained in Study 2, where CLs synchronicity was not included as a predictor variable.

Regarding the interaction effect of subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity, it was revealed that there is a statistically significant interaction effect on product interest ($\beta=-.169$; $se=.071$, CI 95 %=[-.309; -.030], $p=.018$). The analysis results tested conditional effects of subjective knowledge at different directions of the two moderators, VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity, showed significant for the two situations where negative VCLs synchronicity and positive CLs synchronicity exist, and where positive VCLs synchronicity and negative CLs synchronicity exist, are significant (Table 28).

The theoretical framework of this thesis posits that CLs will have primacy over VCLs when coexisting, owing to their influence on market dynamics and the comparatively weaker collective impact of virtual communities, as elucidated in Section 2.10. However, these findings, albeit statistically significant, deviate slightly from the theoretical assertions posited in this thesis. This thesis interprets this, the results may imply that the combined influence of CLs synchronicity and VCLs synchronicity on the outcome may not follow a simple or linear pattern. In other words, non-linearity, a situation where the relationship between two variables is not strictly linear, meaning that changes in one variable do not result in proportional changes in the other, can be existed. Thus, there might be synergistic effects, indicating that the joint impact of these factors working together produces a result that is greater than the sum of their individual effects (Matuschek and Kliegl, 2018). This observation also underscores the powerful yet intricate influence of logic dynamics within

the consumption environment surrounding novel products and its consequential impact on consumers. To gain a comprehensive understanding of these results, Study 4 will further investigate the mechanisms that influence the impact of the combination of VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity on consumers' behavioural intentions. The results of conditional effect test are presented in Table 28 for a clear understanding of the findings.

Table 28 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) and CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) on Product Interest in Study 3

	Positive VCLs Synchronicity	Negative VCLs Synchronicity
Positive CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Significant (+) $\beta=.5515$; $se=.128$, CI 95 %=[.300;.804], $p=.000$
Negative CLs Synchronicity	Significant (+) $\beta=.394$; $se=.146$, CI 95 %=[.107; .682], $p=.008$	Non-significant

4.1.3.3.7 Extra analysis Results 3: Sole Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity and CLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Product Interest

Although it was not defined as the purpose of Study 3, additional tests were conducted to find a deeper understanding of the relationships in order to see if the VCLs synchronicity effect still exists alone even when there is an intervention from the CLs synchronicity. The results of the moderation analysis indicated that there is no moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity when it is the sole moderator in the model. Additionally, to further explore the potential impact of CLs synchronicity as a standalone factor, an additional test was conducted. However, the results of this test also demonstrated non-significant, indicating that the observed effects cannot solely be attributed to the influence of CLs synchronicity alone. This suggests that the relationship between subjective knowledge and the product interest is contingent upon the interaction of both VCLs synchronicity, CLs synchronicity, and product interest. In other words, the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity depends on the presence of the interaction between CLs synchronicity and product interest. This underscores the importance of considering CLs synchronicity and their interactions in understanding the complex nature of the relationships among variables in the model. Comprehensive results of Study 3 are suggested in Table 29.

Table 29 Comprehensive Results Summary of Study 3

		Path		Direct Effect	Moderators	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect
H1d	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Interest	Significant (+)		SK	Significant (+)	
					VCLs Synchronicity	SK*VCLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Negative VCLs synchronicity* Positive CLs synchronicity (+)
H4a	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Interest		* CLs Synchronicity	SK	Significant (-)	Positive VCLs synchronicity* Negative CLs synchronicity (+)
Extra	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Interest		VCLs Synchronicity	SK	Non-significant	
						*VCLs Synchronicity		
Extra	Subjective Knowledge	→	Product Interest		CLs Synchronicity	SK	Non-significant	
						*CLs Synchronicity		
Hypothesis				Result				
H1d	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will be more (less) interested in the corresponding novel products.			Accepted				
H4a	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumer subjective knowledge and product interest related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.			Partially Accepted				

4.1.3.4 Findings

In summary, the results of Study 3 support H1d tested on product interest, again, confirming the direct positive effect of subjective knowledge. Study 3 confirmed the presence of a moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity through VCLs synchronicity between subjective knowledge and product interest, supporting H4a but partially. Specifically, when VCLs are negatively synced but CLs are positively synced, it has a conditional positive interaction effect on product interest. In contrast, when CLs are negatively synced but VCLs are positively synced, it also has a conditional positive interaction effect on product interest.

The findings suggest that consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be less sensitive to the misfit between prevailing ILs between virtual communities and corporations. In other words, consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be more open to novel products and less influenced by the mismatch between VCLs and CLs, leading to higher levels of product interest regardless of the presence of either positive or negative ILs at either institutional order. However, there may be contextual factors or mechanisms at play that influence how the combination of synchronicity at virtual community and corporation levels impacts product interest. Further study may be needed to explore these underlying mechanisms and contextual factors to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between VCLs and CLs synchronicity and their combined influence on product interest.

Additionally, Study 3 conducted additional analyses that revealed that neither VCLs synchronicity nor CLs synchronicity can be considered standalone factors between the relationship of subjective knowledge and product interest, especially when both ILs from different institutional orders coexist. These findings suggest that the relationship between subjective knowledge and product interest is influenced by the interaction of both VCLs and CLs. The results highlight the need to consider the simultaneous effects of multiple factors and their complex dynamics in understanding consumer behavior regarding both virtual communities and corporations.

Overall, Study 3 emphasises the impact of interplay between consumers' subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, CLs synchronicity, and product interest providing evidence for a positive direct effect of subjective knowledge and confirming the presence of a moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity on product interest towards novel products. The next section further studies the underlying psychological mechanisms between variables.

4.1.4 Study 4: The Impact of Consumers' Subjective Knowledge on Novel Products Purchase Intention Moderated by CLs Synchronicity (Conflict) through VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict) and Serial Mediation effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability between Consumers' Subjective Knowledge and Novel Products Purchase Intention

This section presents a comprehensive overview of Study 4, the final study conducted as part of this thesis. Study 4 builds upon the findings derived from the three preceding studies conducted in this thesis and focuses on investigating the interaction effect between ILs conflict arising from virtual communities and corporations, alongside the presence of ILs synchronicity within the respective institutional orders. The primary aim of Study 4 is to examine the interaction effect between ILs conflict arising from both virtual communities and corporations, in addition to ILs synchronicity emerged the two institutional orders. Furthermore, the study aims to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms that are associated with consumers' subjective knowledge, ILs synchronicity, and ILs conflict within virtual communities and corporations, particularly in the context of consuming novel products. By investigating these aspects, Study 4 aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationships among subjective knowledge, and the dynamic of ILs in different institutional orders, and its impact on consumer behavioural intentions in context of novel product consumption.

4.1.4.1 Purpose of Study 4

Previous studies have repeatedly found significant direct effect of subjective knowledge on different types of consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products. Moreover, it was demonstrated that there are significant interaction effects between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity, as well as among subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity.

Study 4 was conducted with the objective of enhancing the ecological validity of the research model by incorporating the complexities found in real-world scenarios, where ILs synchronicity may not always be present within virtual communities or corporations. In practice, between institutional orders, and even within a single institutional order, can exhibit inconsistent ILs. Therefore, Study 4 aims to investigate the effects of ILs conflict emerged within virtual communities and between virtual communities and corporations on consumers' behavioural intention, in addition to examining the impact of ILs synchronicity within both institutional orders. By considering these factors, Study 4 seeks to provide a

more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and influences of ILs synchronicity and conflict on consumers' behavioural intentions in real-world settings.

To achieved this, stimuli for VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and CLs synchronicity (conflict) will be developed in Study 4, adopting a similar approach as employed in the previous studies conducted in this thesis, in order to optimise the benefits associated with modifying stimuli design, such as enhancing ecological validity and external validity of the experimental setup. Regarding the context of novel products, heat pumps will be utilised in Study 4 again.

Study 4 will re-examine the direct effect and interaction effects of the predictors on purchase intention, akin to Study 1. Purchase intention is considered the most powerful indicator of potential purchase behaviour (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008). Study 4 aims to conclude this thesis by investigating the most powerful dependent variable for predicting consumer behavioural intention.

Finally, Study 4 aims to identify and examine the underlying psychological mechanisms that mediates the relationship between subjective knowledge and consumers' purchase intention towards novel products, with a specific focus on the potential mediators of choice confidence and justifiability. Therefore, Study 4 elucidates the mediating psychological mechanisms that explain the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention in the presence of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) as a moderator and CLs synchronicity (conflict) as a moderated moderator. Serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability will be examined in Study 4, and this will be achieved through the utilisation of appropriate research methods and analyses to investigate the cognitive and affective processes that is presented in Table 30.

Table 30 Details of Study 4

Study	Study 4
Design	1(Subjective Knowledge) * 3(Positive VCLs Synchronicity vs Negative VCLs Synchronicity vs VCLs Conflict) * 3(Positive CLs Synchronicity vs Negative CLs Synchronicity vs CLs Conflict)
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the heat pumps perceived as novel products? - Manipulation checks for the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict towards novel products. - Manipulation checks for the stimuli of CLs synchronicity and CLs conflict towards novel products. - To reaffirm direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention towards novel products. - To reaffirm moderation VCLs synchronicity between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products. - To reaffirm moderated moderation effect CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) through VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products. - To investigate a moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products. - To investigate a moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity and CLs conflict through VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products. - To examine the serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products. - To examine the moderated moderating effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs synchronicity (conflict) on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention towards novel products serially mediated by choice confidence and justifiability.
Stimuli 1 (VCLs Synchronicity & VCLs Conflict)	<p>Positive views on heat pumps between members in online forum thread</p> <p>Negative views on heat pumps between members in online forum thread</p> <p>Conflicting views on heat pumps between members in online forum thread</p>
Stimuli 2 (CLs Synchronicity & CLs Conflict)	<p>Positive views on heat pumps from CEO in the heating energy market</p> <p>Negative views on heat pumps from CEO in the heating energy market</p> <p>Conflicting views on heat pumps from CEO in the heating energy market</p>
Stimuli (Novel product)	Heat Pumps
Stimuli setting	<p>Online Forum Thread (VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict))</p> <p>News articles (CLs Synchronicity (Conflict))</p>
Dependent variable	Purchase Intention

Table continues

Moderator	VCLs Synchronicity and VCLs Conflict
Moderated Moderator	CLs Synchronicity and CLs Conflict
Mediator 1	Choice Confidence
Mediator 2	Justifiability
Control variables	N/A
Analyses	<p>Frequency distribution analysis Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test Bartlett's test of sphericity Cronbach alpha test Exploratory Factor Analysis Linear regression analysis Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 1) Moderated Moderation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 3) Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis Serial mediation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 6) Mediation, Moderation, and Moderated Mediation analysis (Hayes Process Macro Model 83)</p>
Key findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct positive main effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention • Conditional two-way interaction effect (<i>Subjective Knowledge</i>*<i>VCLs Synchronicity</i>) • Conditional three-way interaction effect (<i>Subjective Knowledge</i>*<i>VCLs Synchronicity</i> * <i>CLs Synchronicity</i>) • Conditional two-way interaction effect (<i>Subjective Knowledge</i>*<i>VCLs Synchronicity/Conflict</i>) • Conditional three-way interaction effect (<i>Subjective Knowledge</i> *<i>VCLs Synchronicity/Conflict</i> *<i>CLs Synchronicity/Conflict</i>) • Serial mediation effect of Choice confidence and Justifiability between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention • Conditional two-way interaction effect (<i>Subjective Knowledge</i> *<i>CLs Synchronicity/Conflict</i>)

Table 31 provides a summary of the hypotheses derived from the research objectives outlined in the earlier of this thesis. Additionally, Figure 18 presents a schematic diagram that illustrates the conceptual framework to be examined in Study 4. The diagram visually represents corresponding hypotheses that are formulated to test these relationships.

Table 31 Hypotheses of Study 4

	Independent variable	Moderator 1	Moderator 2	Mediator	Dependent variable	Hypothesis
H1a	Subjective Knowledge				Purchase Intention	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have higher (lower) purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products.
H2a	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)			Purchase Intention	The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.
H3	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Conflict			Purchase Intention	The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs conflict, such that VCLs conflict will lead to positive outcomes.
H4b	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)	CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative)		Purchase Intention	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.

	Independent variable	Moderator 1	Moderator 2	Mediators	Dependent variable	Hypothesis
H5	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) & VCLs Conflict	CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) & CLs Conflict		Purchase Intention	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that, when VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.
H6	Subjective Knowledge			M1: Choice Confidence M2: Justifiability	Purchase Intention	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have a significant indirect effect on purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products through serial mediation of choice confidence and justifiability.
H7	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) & VCLs Conflict		M1: Choice Confidence M2: Justifiability	Purchase Intention	The mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability between the relationship of consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by VCLs, such that positive (negative) VCLs synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs are in conflict, the moderating effect will be positive.
H8	Subjective Knowledge	VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) & VCLs Conflict	CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) & CLs Conflict		Choice Confidence	The moderation effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and choice confidence related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.

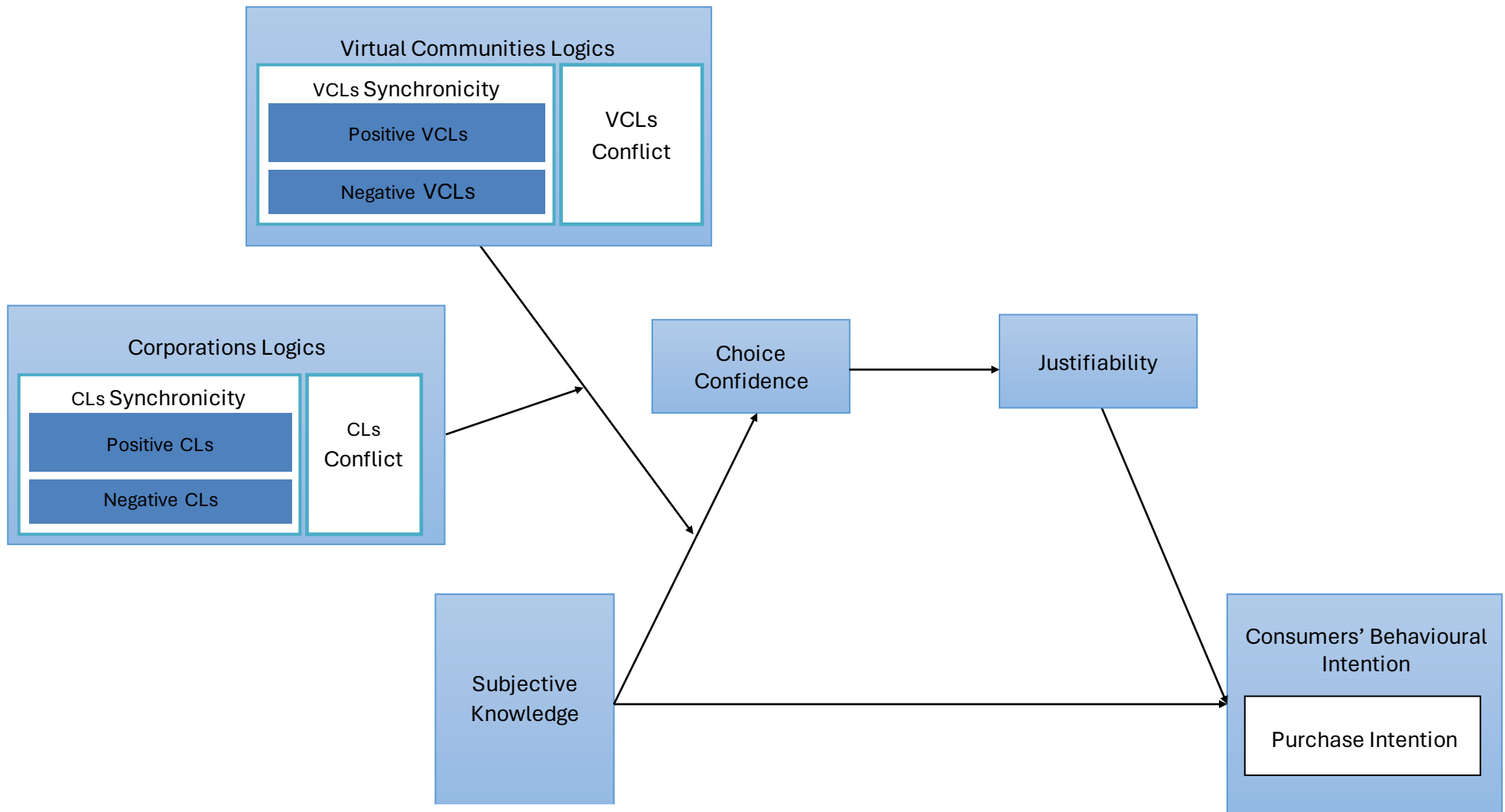


Figure 18 Conceptual Framework of Study 4

4.1.4.2 Study Design and Procedure

This segment presents a summary of the design of Study 4, outlining the particular steps implemented in the progression of the study.

4.1.4.2.1 Stimuli Development for VCLs Synchronicity and VCLs Conflict

In Study 4, the online forum thread format that was previously used as a stimuli design in Study 2 will be utilised once again. This format has been validated in earlier studies conducted within this thesis. In Study 4, the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict will be presented in the form of an online forum thread design but within a specific contextual focus on heat pumps.

The detailed designs in Study 4 were maintained to be consistent with the stimuli used in Study 2 including the approach of inserting the banner into the thread by utilising images sourced from the actual online forum “buildhub”, <https://forum.buildhub.org.uk/>), ensuring similar thread length and content, replicating member usernames, and including indicators of member rankings.

For the conflicting scenarios in Study 4, the online forum conversations will be used to depict the inconsistencies in the three member’ experiences, values, and beliefs, effectively capturing the conflicting nature of their perspectives. In particular, for the conflicting scenario, it was considered that the presentation order of positive and negative opinions among the three members may influence participants’ perception of the thread. As a result, separate designs were created, with one displaying positive ILs first and the other displaying negative ILs first. These designs were randomly shown to participants in order to minimise potential bias in the study. The detailed designs were presented in the following manner.

Welcome to buildhub

Member Statistics
Total Members 83,456
Today's Posts 392

Fresh member
Hi, all! This is my first post. I just came to know about the heat pumps. My question is this:
A
akale
1 Post

How do the Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) work? Do they provide hot water fast only when you want/need it, e.g., for doing the washing up?
If not, does that mean they are always on/active working away, and if so, is that not expensive regarding when the bills come in? Many thanks.

Legend
Welcome, @akale!
ASHP is just a replacement and likely requires very few changes made to the existing.
X
xoya
15,927 Posts

They work very fast and at much higher temperatures so no need a large water tank.
They will not need neither UFH nor larger radiators. If you consider these, it may be a TERRIFIC option for you 🙌

Senior member
I TOTALLY agree on @xoya.
L
lulu
14,341 Posts

You DO NOT need to put loads of insulation and some draft proofing in before installing a heat pump.
And, the high temperature heat will cause very little leakage, and your electricity bills will be cut off.

Top Contributors

Z
zetzet
Recognised Legend
16,430 Posts
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xoya
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L
lulu
Senior Member
14,341 Posts
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U
ulala
Senior Member
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15,927 Posts

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lulu
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Figure 19 Stimuli of Positive and Negative VCLs Synchronicity in Context of Heat Pumps

Member Statistics
Total Members 83,456
Today's Posts 392

Top Contributors

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Senior Member
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Top Contributors

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Figure 20 Stimuli of VCLs Conflict in Context of Heat Pumps (Left: Positive-Negative, Right: Negative-Positive)

4.1.4.2.2 Stimuli Development for CLs Synchronicity and CLs Conflict

The stimuli design used in the investigation of CLs synchronicity in Study 4 resembled the format employed in Study 3, which involved the use of a news article as stimuli for CLs synchronicity. However, the stimuli in Study 4 were specifically tailored to the context of heat pumps, which had been identified as novel products in Study 1. In addition to CLs synchronicity, Study 4 incorporated stimuli depicting CLs conflict. These stimuli were carefully crafted to showcase conflicting opinions and strategies of two prominent companies operating in the heat pumps market, representing divergent positions regarding heat pumps (Table 32). The design aimed to create a scenario that reflected CLs conflict by presenting contrasting viewpoints, strategies, and positions of the companies with respect to heat pump products, aligning with established academic research practices. The following Table illustrates the stimuli devised and employed in Study 4.

Table 32 Stimuli Designs of CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) and CLs Conflict

Positive CLs synchronicity	<p>The UK's most awarded heating energy company has announced that it will produce more heat pumps as part of its new 'Green Energy Revolution' plan. It aims to sell more than 7 million of their heat pumps by the end of 2030.</p> <p>The company plans to invest £100m in the UK's first heat pumps development & installation service centre in the coming year, where they will look for innovations that create even more efficient heat pumps. The company is also aiming to train more than 1,000 heat pump engineers and specialists. For 'user experience'(UX) improvement relating to Heat Pumps, the company is developing an easy-to-use app.</p> <p>The CEO of the company said, "Heat pumps are just going to take over the market soon. We pledge to offer cutting-edge heat pumps. We aim to make our heat pumps the unbeatable opponents of the current conventional boiler."</p>
Negative CLs synchronicity	<p>The UK's most awarded heating energy company has announced that it will produce new brand of boilers as part of its new 'Energy Revolution' plan. It aims to sell more than 7 million of their new versions of boiler by the end of 2030.</p> <p>The company plans to invest £100m in the UK's first boiler development & installation service centre in the coming year, where they will look for innovations that create even more efficient boilers. The company is also aiming to train 1,000 boiler engineers and specialists. For 'user experience'(UX) improvement, relating to boilers, the company is developing an easy-to-use app.</p> <p>The CEO of the company said, "Heat pumps are just going to take way longer than the media would like us to believe. We pledge to offer a cutting-edge array of boilers instead of heat pumps that are still in the primitive stage of the market. We aim to make our boilers the unbeatable opponents of the recent hype of heat pumps."</p>

Table continues

In a recent debate, differing views about the Heat Pump technology were laid bare among top UK energy firms. One CEO of an energy firm stated that “Heat pumps are just going to take over the market soon. We pledge to offer cutting-edge heat pumps. We aim to make our heat pumps the unbeatable opponents of the current conventional boiler.”.

CLs
Conflict On the other hand, a rival CEO claimed, “Heat pumps are just going to take way longer than the media would like us to believe. We pledge to offer a cutting-edge array of boilers instead of heat pumps that are still in the primitive stage of the market. We aim to make our boilers the unbeatable opponents of the recent hype of heat pumps.”.

These two companies, which show different views on the dominance of heating equipment in the near future, are each investing nearly £100m in the UK’s first development and installation service centre in the coming year, where they aim to build innovations that create even more efficient heat pumps and conventional boilers, respectively.

4.1.4.2.3 Study Distribution and Participants Characteristics

The survey was designed in Qualtrics. They were reached out through Prolific to 326 participants residing in the United Kingdom on the 7th, 8th, and 10th February 2023, respectively. A sum of 25 participants did not meet the attention check criteria, and one participant did not pass the memory test. This led to the utilisation of a total of 300 responses for Study 4. These responses encompassed 134 (44.67%) from female participants, 162 (54%) from male participants, and 4 (1.33%) from participants identifying as the third gender. The participant’ average age was 38.61. As the number of stimuli and the variables to be measured were increased, more time were given for reading the given scenario, thus, respondents were given approximately 11.20 minutes for responding and received £11 GBP per hour as their monetary rewards.

Before the participants joined the study, the purpose of study was briefed, and it was told that they will be asked about the heat pumps technologies and their attitude towards the product. General information about the research, ethical approval (ID: 78423), and guidance about the attention check questions were suggested as well with the asking their consent to study participation.

4.1.4.2.4 Sequence of Steps for Study 4 and Measurement Scales

Corresponding to the previous studies in this thesis, manipulation tests were conducted on the designed stimuli of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and CLs synchronicity (conflict) and applied to the remaining procedure of the Study 4 after verifying its suitability and validity. The overall procedure of Study 4 and the requirement or characteristic of the study participants were the same as that of Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3. The design of the stimuli

has changed to online forum thread format to measure the effect of VCLs synchronicity (VCLs conflict), and news article format was borrowed to measure the effect of CLs synchronicity (VCLs conflict). The context of the response was adopted heat pumps as novel products, and the purchase intention was measured as a dependent variable.

In total, 300 of respondents were initially asked about their subjective knowledge of the heat pumps followed by a manipulation check of the heat pumps as novel products and VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) and VCLs conflict. Using a full scale measurement developed by Beatty and Talpade (1994) and Flynn and Goldsmith (1999), subjective knowledge were measured.

Then, participants enter the stage of manipulation test examining heat pumps are suitable to be considered as novel products in order to be used in the remainder of the study. A video explaining the heat pumps technology that was used in Study 1 was used again for the manipulation check for heat pumps (<https://youtu.be/EwWv4vBulll>) (Figure 11). After the video watching, participants were asked to answer the questions about the degree of novelty using the measurement developed by Cox and Cox (2002). After that, the stimuli of VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict in style of online forum thread (Figure 19 and 20) and the stimuli of CLs synchronicity and CLs conflict in style of news article (Table 32) were assigned randomly with equal number of distributions. Participants then asked how they accepted the stimuli for manipulation checks of both VCLs synchronicity (VCLs conflict) and CLs synchronicity (CLs conflict).

As a final step of the main test, participants were asked about their purchase intention of heat pumps and questions measuring mediation effect and variables of alternative explanations. By exploring alternative possibilities and ruling out potential alternative explanations, Study 4 aims to enhance the robustness and validity of the mediation effects of choice confidence and justifiability (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). The chosen three alternative explanations in Section 2.11.5, namely anticipated regret, uncertainty avoidance, and conformity tendency, will counterbalance the potential order effects or sequence effects that may confound the results. The measurement items for mediators, variables for alternative explanation, and dependent variable were randomised. Each of the item for mediators and variable for alternative explanation and their source of the measurement were describe in the Table 33. Finally, the sociodemographic information has been asked as a final step with debriefing of the true objective of this study and thanking message.

The detailed scales used in Study 4 are suggested in Table 33. The next section reports the analysis results of Study 4 followed by the details of the analysis method used.

Table 33 Measurements used in Study 4

Variables	Used Items and Scale	Scale based on
Manipulation Test		
Degree of Novelty ($\alpha = .839$)	(a)Old-New (b)Unoriginal-Original (c)Common-Unusual (d)Familiar-Novel (e)Typical-Atypical (7-point bipolar scales)	Cox and Cox (2002)
VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict)	In the conversation you just read, what are the views of the people who responded to the question about "Heat Pumps"? (Positive-Negative-in Conflict) You think that the views of the people who responded to the question about 'Heat Pumps' in the conversation are generally ~. What do you think is the intensity of that emotion? (None-Very Mild-Mild-Moderate-Severe)	Author-formulated
CLs Synchronicity (Conflict)	In the article you just read, what are the views of the heating energy company(s) about "Heat Pumps"? (Positive-Negative-in Conflict) You think that the views of the heating energy company(s) towards 'Heat Pumps' are generally ~. What do you think is the intensity of that emotion? (None-Very Mild-Mild-Moderate-Severe)	Author-formulated
Main test		
Independent variable		
Subjective Knowledge ($\alpha = .878$)	(a) I know a lot about Heat Pumps technology. (b) I do not feel very knowledgeable about Heat Pumps technology. (reverse scored) (c) Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on Heat Pumps technology. (d) Compared to most other people, I know less about Heat Pumps technology. (reverse scored) (e) When it comes to Heat Pumps technology, I really don't know a lot. (reverse scored) (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)	Beatty and Talpade (1994), Flynn and Goldsmith (1999)

Table continues

Mediator

Conformity tendency ($\alpha = .827$)	(a) I often rely and act upon the advice of others. (b) A charismatic and eloquent speaker can easily influence and change my ideas. (c) I am more independent than conforming in my ways. (d) If someone is very persuasive, I tend to change my opinion and go along with them. (e) I don't give in to others easily. (f) I tend to rely on others when I have to make an important decision quickly. (g) I prefer to make my own way in life rather than find a group I can follow. (h) Basically, people around me are the ones who decide what we do together. (i) Generally, I'd rather give in and go along with majority of others for consistency. (j) I would seldom change my opinion in a heated argument on a controversial topic.	Mehrabian and Stefl (1995)
(1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)		
Variables	Used Items and Scale	Scale based on
Mediator		
Uncertainty Avoidance ($\alpha = .835$)	(a) I tend to get anxious easily when I don't know an outcome. (b) I prefer structured situations to unstructured situations. (c) I prefer specific instructions to broad guidelines. (d) I don't like ambiguous situations. (e) I believe that rules should not be broken for mere pragmatic reasons. (f) I would not take risks when an outcome cannot be predicted. (g) I feel stressful when I cannot predict consequences.	Jung and Kellaris (2004)
(1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)		

Table continues

Justifiability ($\alpha = .730$)	(a) I thought it would be easy to justify a purchase decision in case someone challenges it with regards to Heat Pumps. (b) I was able to see at first sight that Heat Pumps are superior. (c) In order to decide for one Heat Pump, it was not necessary to make any difficult trade-offs. (1=Strongly Disagree, 9=Strongly Agree)	Measurement used in Heitmann et al. (2007) developed based on the qualitative pre-study
Choice Confidence ($\alpha = .0.856$)	(a) <i>It is impossible for me to be certain the Heat Pumps fits my preferences best. (Removed after reliability test)</i> (b) I feel confident when identifying the Heat Pumps that best matches my preferences. (c) I am convinced to find the Heat Pumps that best fulfils my needs. (1=Strongly Disagree, 9=Strongly Agree)	Bruner et al. (2001), Urbany et al. (1997)
Anticipated Regret ($\alpha = .826$)	1) When I select a Heat Pump, I am worried to get information after the purchase on superior competing products. 2) When I choose a Heat Pump, I am curious about what would have happened if I choose differently. 3) I am worried others would expect me to deliberate more extensively and make a better choice. 4) Even after finding a good option for Heat Pumps, I fear that I am overlooking better products. 5) When I select a Heat Pump, I am curious how much I would appreciate competing offers. (1=Strongly Disagree, 9=Strongly Agree)	Oliver (1997), Schwartz et al. (2002), Tsiros and Mittal (2000)
Dependent variable		
Purchase Intention	How likely would you be to purchase a Heat Pump?	(1= Extremely Unlikely, 7=Extremely Likely) Friedman et al. (2018)
Sociodemographic		
Age, Gender, Employment, Marital, Education, Income		

4.1.4.2.5 Analysis Methods

All statistical analysis testing hypotheses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted to secure the structural validity in order to conduct EFA that allows to test construct validity. The analysis results of KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the quality of the measurements was satisfactory, showing a KMO value above 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974), and a significance level for Bartlett's test below 0.05. Cronbach alpha test were conducted as well to secure reliability of the measurement. For all variables except choice confidence showed Cronbach alpha values over 0.7. One item was removed as it significantly affects the measurement reliability. Following the treatment, the reliability of the measurements was validated, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.856 being obtained (as indicated in Table 33).

Based on the confirmed suitability of the data through the KMO test and Bartlett's test, the EFA was conducted. When conducting EFA on seven variables altogether, one item of conformity tendency showed low factor loading, so that item has been removed. In the first trial of EFA, the number of factors was not fixed, and it was found that each factor measuring the independent variable (subjective knowledge) and two out of the three variables proposed as alternative explanations (conformity tendency and anticipated regret) described the construct well. However, the dependent variable (purchase intention), the two mediators proposed in the study (choice confidence and justifiability), and uncertainty avoidance showed a mixture of factor loadings. This may be due to the high correlation between these variables.

Given that the primary focus of the study was to investigate the extent to which the two proposed mediators (i.e., choice confidence and justifiability) could account for the underlying psychological mechanism, it was deemed imperative to establish the construct validity of these variables. Consequently, a second trial of EFA was conducted, wherein only the two variables of choice confidence and justifiability were extracted with a fixed number of two factors. Additionally, a separate EFA was performed on the variables of uncertainty, conformity tendency, and anticipated regret to ensure that the constructs were adequately captured.

Both analyses showed that all constructs were combined as intended, but one item of uncertainty showed a low factor loading of 0.324 and was subsequently removed from the analysis. The results of the separately conducted EFA for the variables, along with the final analysis result, are presented in Table 34. Because the EFAs were conducted separately for

each variable, eigenvalues were not suggested in the table. The combined results in Table 34 provide a comprehensive view of the factor structure of the data, highlighting the unique contributions of each variable to the underlying constructs being measured.

Table 34 Measurement Validity and Reliability Test Results of Study 4

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.835
	Approx. Chi-Square	4894.719
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	561
	Sig.	<.001
Exploratory Factor Analysis	Number of items	EFA loading
Subjective Knowledge	5	0.693-0.895
Purchase Intention	2	0.639-0.837
Conformity Tendency	10 → 9 <i>One items is removed due to the low factor loading</i>	0.536-0.730
Uncertainty Avoidance	7 → 6 <i>One items is removed due to the low factor loading</i>	0.505-0.807
Justifiability	3	0.667-0.727
Choice Confidence	2	0.753-0.998
Anticipated Regret	5	0.556-0.721

Extraction method: Common Factor Analysis, Rotation Method: Direct Oblimin

4.1.4.3 Analysis Results

In this section, the analysis results of Study 4 are presented as well as an explanation of the analysis methods employed to achieve the objectives of the study. The analysis in Study 4 proceeded in the following order: (a) manipulation tests of stimuli (the degree of novelty), (b) manipulation tests of stimuli (VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and CLs synchronicity (conflict)), (c) examination of the direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention, (d) investigation of the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict), (e) testing serial mediation effect of confidence and justifiability, and (f) testing the effect of alternative explanation.

4.1.4.3.1 Manipulation Test Results 1: Degree of Novelty of Heat Pumps

After confirming the measurement reliability ($\alpha=.839$), it was able to identify the highest- and lowest-scoring for the degree of novelty for the heat pumps through the frequency distribution analysis on the 300 responds. The results indicate that participants, on average, have a solid understanding of heat pumps as novel products, with a mean score of 5.61 on a 7-point scale (Table 35). This mean score exceeding the median value confirms that heat pumps are perceived as novel products by the participants.

Table 35 Frequency Analysis Results of the Degree of Novelty for Heat Pumps

Novel Product	Mean of Each item					Overall Mean
	Old (1): New (7)	Unoriginal (1): Original (7)	Common (1): Unusual (7)	Familiar (1): Novel (7)	Typical (1): Atypical (7)	
Heat Pumps	6.22	6.01	5.32	5.31	5.17	5.61

4.1.4.3.2 Manipulation Test Results 2: VCLs Synchronicity and VCLs Conflict

To assess the effectiveness of manipulating VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict stimuli and ensure participants' comprehension of these stimuli, frequency analysis was conducted. In this manipulation test, three options were presented to 300 participants who were exposed to three different scenarios: positive VCLs synchronicity (n=100), negative VCLs synchronicity (n=102), and VCLs conflict scenario (n=98). After exposing one of these scenarios, each participant was directly asked to answer their perception of stimuli as positive, negative, or conflicting.

Importantly, before conducting the manipulation test on VCLs conflict stimuli, a pre-processing step was implemented to minimise potential biases that could arise from the order of presenting positive and negative views on novel products in forum scenarios. It was examined whether varying the display order of VCLs conflict affected participants' responses. Participants were divided into two groups: one exposed to positive-negative VCLs conflict scenario and the other to negative-positive VCLs conflict scenario. Then, the frequency of the answers was calculated and compared to determine if the scenarios were perceived identically as VCLs conflict scenario.

Among the 48 participants exposed to the positive-negative VCLs conflict scenario, only four provided unexpected answers by perceiving it as positive VCLs synchronicity. In contrast, all 50 participants exposed to the positive scenario VCLs conflict scenario correctly perceived it as VCLs conflict. Although there is a gap of 4 participants between the positive-negative and

the negative-positive VCLs conflict scenario, with a margin of error of 4.08%, it is still reasonable to conclude that the order of presenting positive and negative views on novel products does not significantly impact the intended perception of VCLs conflict.

Similarly, out of 100 participants who received the positive VCLs synchronicity scenario, only 5 recognised the stimuli as VCLs conflict (with a margin of error of 5%). On the other hand, 102 participants exposed to the negative VCLs synchronicity scenario, with 37 recognising the stimuli as either VCLs conflict or positive VCLs synchronicity (margin of error 36.27%). Despite the somewhat larger error among participants who received the negative VCLs synchronicity scenario, when compared to the results of manipulation tests on other stimuli, it appears reasonable. Consequently, this analysis validates the use of these stimuli in the subsequent phases of Study 4.

4.1.4.3.3 Manipulation Test Results 3: CLs Synchronicity and CLs Conflict

Manipulation tests for CLs synchronicity and CLs conflict were conducted similarly to the previous manipulation tests for VCLs synchronicity and VCLs conflict in Section 4.1.4.3.2. To evaluate the effectiveness of manipulating CLs synchronicity and CLs conflict stimuli and ensure participants' understanding of these stimuli, a frequency analysis was conducted. In this manipulation test, three options were presented to 300 participants exposed to three different scenarios: positive CLs synchronicity (n=98), negative CLs synchronicity (n=103), and CLs conflict scenario (n=99). After exposure to one of these scenarios, each participant was directly asked to indicate their perception of the stimuli as positive, negative, or conflicting. Out of the 98 participants who received the positive CLs synchronicity scenario, only 3 recognised the stimuli as CLs conflict (with a margin of error of 3.06%). In contrast, among the 103 participants exposed to the negative CLs synchronicity scenario, 37 recognised the stimuli as either CLs conflict or positive CLs synchronicity (margin of error 35.92%). Finally, among the 99 participants exposed to the CLs conflict scenario, 11 provided unexpected answers by perceiving it as either positive VCLs synchronicity or negative CLs synchronicity, with a margin of error of 11.11%. Consequently, this analysis validates the use of CLs stimuli in the subsequent phases of Study 4.

4.1.4.3.4 Main Test Analysis Results 1: Direct Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Purchase Intention

The analysis in this section aims to reaffirm the hypothesis 1a that was examined and confirmed the linear relationship between subjective knowledge and consumers' purchase intention towards the novel products.

The Main Effect of Subjective Knowledge on Purchase Intention

In order to examine the assumed relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention, linear regression was conducted. The regression model shows a statistically significant relationship between the subjective knowledge and the purchase intention ($b=.142$, $p=.014$), supporting H1a again (Table 36).

Table 36 Linear Regression Analysis Results of Study 4

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig
		B	Std.Error	Beta		
Purchase Intention	Subjective Knowledge	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014

4.1.4.3.5 Main Test Analysis Results 2: Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention towards Novel Products

This section aimed to reconfirm the interaction effect between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity but on purchase intention, as revealed in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3, testing hypothesis 2b.

The Interaction Effect of Subjective Knowledge and VCLs Synchronicity on Purchase Intention

After securing the internal consistency of the scales, a moderated regression analysis was conducted with 300 observations to predict purchase intention using two predictor variables subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity by using Hayes process macro model 1.

From the process macro model 1 conducted, the estimation of the model showed a significant interactive effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator VCLs synchronicity on purchase intention confirming the interaction effect of VCLs synchronicity found in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 ($\beta=-.158$; $se=.062$, $CI\ 95\ \%=[-.280; -.036]$, $p=0.011$). The inclusion of bootstrap analysis resulted in an improved model fit, indicating that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R=.217$, $R-sq=.047$, $MSE=1.197$, $p=.022$).

The post-hoc analysis result examining the conditional effects of subjective knowledge on purchase intention at different directions of VCLs synchronicity revealed a significant conditional effect for negative VCLs synchronicity ($\beta=.190$, $se=.081$, $CI\ 95\ \%=[.030; .351]$,

$p=.020$) while non-significant conditional effect for for positive VCLs synchronicity ($\beta=-.125$, $se=.093$, $CI\ 95\ \%=[-.309;.058]$, $p=.179$). This result reconfirmed the interaction effect of VCLs synchronicity indicating consistency with the results obtained in Study 1 and Study 2.

However, the result reveals that there is no direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention ($\beta =.032$; $p=.600$) which is not in line with the result of the linear regression analysis previously conducted. This may be potentially due to new intervention of the variables in Study 4 such as two moderators (VCLs conflict and CLs conflict) and mediators. Introducing additional variables could change the dynamics of the relationships between the variables, leading to different findings (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). For example, if the mediators play a role in the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable, it may lead the disappearance of the direct effect of independent variable when the mediators are included.

In summary, the findings of Study 4 were generally consistent with the results of previous studies, with one exception being the lack of a significant direct effect of subjective knowledge. These findings suggest the possibility of a mediation effect, and further analysis will be conducted in the subsequent section to explore this potential mechanism in more detail.

4.1.4.3.6 Main Test Analysis Results 3: Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity through VCLs Synchronicity with on Purchase Intention towards Novel Products

In previous studies, Study 3, a conditional moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity was revealed by examining the interaction effect of subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity. Study 4 aims to test H4b by reconfirming the presence of a moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity within the context of this study by looking into the interaction effect between subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity on purchase intention in the consumption context of heat pumps. By examining whether the conditional effect of CLs synchronicity will appear in other product consumption context once more, this study aims to give sturdier confirmation on the presence of moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity. A moderated moderation analysis was performed using model 3 developed by Hayes (2015) with 300 observations including subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, CLs synchronicity, and their interactions, along with the outcome variable of purchase intention.

Again, the analysis result did not show the direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention, opposing to the findings from the previous studies in this thesis ($\beta = -.037$; $se = .082$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.198; .125]$, $p = 0.652$). However, it is noteworthy that a statistically significant interaction effect involving subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity on purchase intention was identified ($\beta = -.207$; $se = .082$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.369; -.046]$, $p = .012$), as confirmed in Study 1. The explanation for these statistical features can be elucidated as follows.

In the framework of Study 4, wherein the mediation effect is incorporated into the analytical process, the model posits that a portion or the entirety of the total effect of exposure on an outcome (purchase intention) transpires through two mediators (choice confidence and justifiability). These mediators serve as intermediary variables influenced by the stimuli exposure during the study participation. In a chain, the intervention of mediators in the model measured influences participants' responses, namely, the study outcome. With the introduction of hypothesised mediators, the total effect can be deconstructed into two discernible components: the direct effect and the indirect effect. The direct effect represents the impact of exposure on the outcome in the absence of the mediator. In contrast, the indirect pathway delineates the impact of exposure on the outcome that operates through the mediator. In other words, the presence of mediators such as choice confidence and justifiability in the model may intervene in the relationship between subjective knowledge and the dependent variable (purchase intention). This can attenuate or obscure the direct effect of subjective knowledge on the dependent variable, resulting in a non-significant direct effect.

However, Studies 1 to 3 have shown that the moderation effect of VCL synchronicity and CL synchronicity influences the relationship between subjective knowledge (the independent variable) and the dependent variables (the models in the three studies do not include mediation effect examination). Thus, same as the other three studies, even in the absence of a direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention, the interaction effect involving subjective knowledge, VCLs synchronicity, and CLs synchronicity remains evident in Study 4. This observation underscores the nuanced nature of the relationship, highlighting that while the direct influence of subjective knowledge on purchase intention is not discernible in Study 4, the interplay with VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity introduces a complex interaction effect. This interaction effect implies that the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention is contingent upon the specific conditions of the VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity, emphasising the intricacies inherent in the study's

conceptual model, which may come from the other two mediators, choice confidence and justifiability.

In support of this, the model utilising 5000 bootstrap samples demonstrated statistical significance, indicating that the model as a whole exhibited a favourable fit to the data and was proficient in explaining a noteworthy amount of variance in the outcome variable ($R=.348$, $R\text{-sq}=.121$, $MSE=1.235$, $p=.023$). This suggests that the current model, inclusive of both mediators, provides a superior model fit to the data compared to the results obtained from the model examined in the previous studies where mediators were not included as predictor variables.

Finally, the analysis also delved into the specific conditional effects of subjective knowledge under different directions of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) and CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative). Whereas there were conditional effects for two situations where positive CLs synchronicity and negative VCLs synchronicity and where positive VCLs synchronicity and negative CLs synchronicity in Study 3, Study 4 showed significance only for the former conditional situation. However, the result still showed positive direction on outcome variable (purchase intention) same as in Study 3. Based on the consistent results from both Study 3 and Study 4, it was confirmed that when there is a negative VCLs synchronicity and positive CLs synchronicity towards novel products, consumers with higher subjective knowledge tend to show higher purchase intention towards novel products. The results in Table 37 visualise a clear understanding of the conditional interaction effects of VCLs synchronicity and CLs synchronicity.

Table 37 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of VCLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) and CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) on Purchase Intention in Study 4

	Positive VCLs Synchronicity	Negative VCLs Synchronicity
Positive CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Significant (+) $\beta=.458$; $se=.152$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [.156; .759]$, $p=0.003$
Negative CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Non-significant

Extra Analysis

An extra analysis was conducted to explore the potential impact of CLs synchronicity as a standalone factor as examined in Study 3. This additional test showed same result as in Study 3 by showing non-significant effect of CLs synchronicity as a moderator, indicating that

CLs synchronicity does not have a sole moderating effect in the model. This suggests that the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity depends on the presence of the interaction between CLs synchronicity and purchase intention. This emphasises the importance of considering CLs synchronicity and their interactions in understanding the complex nature of the relationships among variables in the model as shown in Study 3.

4.1.4.3.7 Main Test Analysis Results 4: Moderation Effect of VCLs Conflict on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention towards Novel Product

This section aims to explore the moderation effect of VCLs conflict on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention, testing hypothesis 3. A moderated regression analysis was performed using model 1 developed by Hayes (2015) with 300 observations. The analysis included two predictors, subjective knowledge and VCLs conflict, along with the outcome variable of purchase intention. The result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R=.331$, $R\text{-sq}=.110$, $MSE=1.1841$, $p=.012$). However, the result of model 3 showed a non-significant interaction effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator VCLs conflict on purchase intention ($\beta=.025$; $se=.091$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.156; .206]$, $p=0.785$). Therefore, the results of Study 4 reject hypotheses 3.

4.1.4.3.8 Main Test Analysis Results 5: Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity (Conflict) through VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict) on Purchase Intention

This section aims to explore moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through the examination of the interaction effect between subjective knowledge and VCLs synchronicity (conflict), and CLs synchronicity (conflict) on purchase intention, to examine hypothesis 5. A moderated moderation regression analysis was performed using model 3 developed by Hayes (2015) with 300 observations. The analysis included three predictors, subjective knowledge and three levels of VCLs and CLs (positive synchronicity vs negative synchronicity vs conflict), along with the outcome variable of purchase intention.

The result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that there is non-significant direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention ($\beta = .0938$; $p=0.072$). The inclusion of bootstrap analysis resulted in an improved model fit, indicating that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R=.265$, $R\text{-sq}=.070$, $MSE=1.193$, $p=.003$). The estimation of the model generated through the process macro model 3 showed a significant interactive effect for

both cases, 1) subjective knowledge * VCLs synchronicity (conflict) on purchase intention ($\beta = -.160$; $se = .063$, CI 95 % = $[-.283; -.036]$, $p = 0.011$) as well as 2) subjective knowledge * VCLs synchronicity (conflict) * CLs synchronicity (conflict) on purchase intention ($\beta = -.188$; $se = .079$, CI 95 % = $[-.343; -.033]$, $p = 0.017$).

Table 38 shows the post-hoc analysis result examining the conditional effects of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and CLs synchronicity (conflict). A significant conditional effects for the cases (a) negative VCLs synchronicity * CLs conflict ($\beta = .254$, $se = .076$, CI 95 % = $[.104; .403]$, $p = .001$) and (b) negative VCLs synchronicity * positive CLs synchronicity ($\beta = .460$, $se = .123$, CI 95 % = $[.217; .703]$, $p = .000$) were revealed. The results suggests that consumers possessing high levels of subjective knowledge tend to exhibit greater purchase intention towards novel products when confronted with situations where VCLs and CLs are collide.

Table 38 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of VCLs (Synchronised vs Conflict) and CLs (Synchronised vs Conflict) on Purchase Intention in Study 4

	Positive VCLs Synchronicity	Negative VCLs Synchronicity	VCLs Conflict
Positive CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Significant (+) $\beta = .460$; $se = .123$, CI 95 % = $ [.217; .703]$, $p = .000$	Non-significant
Negative CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant	Non-significant	Non-significant
CLs Conflict	Non-significant	Significant (+) $\beta = .254$; $se = .076$, CI 95 % = $ [.104; .403]$, $p = 0.001$	Non-significant

4.1.4.3.9 Main Test Analysis Results 6: Serial Mediation Effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention

This section aims to test hypothesis 6 by understanding the psychological mechanism underlying the effect of subjective knowledge by testing the mediation effect and ruling out alternative explanations.

Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Mediators

After verifying that all five variables met the assumptions for linear regression analysis, linear regression was performed. The results revealed that all variables showed a significant relationship with subjective knowledge (Table 39).

Table 39 Linear Relationships between Subjective Knowledge and Potential Mediators

Dependent variable	Independent variable	R	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig
			B	Std.Error	Beta		
Anticipated Regret	Subjective Knowledge	.124	-.136	.063	-.124	-2.157	.032
Uncertainty Avoidance	Subjective Knowledge	.191	-.161	.048	-.191	-3.355	<.001
Justifiability	Subjective Knowledge	.179	.205	.065	.179	3.134	.002
Choice Confidence	Subjective Knowledge	.308	.454	.081	.308	5.584	<.001
Conformity Tendency	Subjective Knowledge	.121	-.083	.040	-.121	-2.102	.036

Relationship between Subjective Knowledge, Mediators, and Purchase Intention

Next, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted according to the mediation process suggested by MacKinnon et al. (2007) that is followed the classical approach to measuring the mediating effect summarised by Baron and Kenny (1986) to analyse the potential mediating effect of variables. The following is the procedure MacKinnon et al. (2007) suggested.

- 1) First, evidence of a significant association between the independent variable and the mediating variable (referred to as path A) was examined.
- 2) Second, the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables (path B) was evaluated for significance.
- 3) Lastly, the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables, initially established as significant in the second step, was assessed for attenuation (partial mediation) or non-significant (complete mediation) when the independent and mediating variables were considered simultaneously.

The analysis results were in line with the conditions described earlier, indicating the presence of mediation effects. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that both choice confidence and justifiability fully mediate the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention (Table 40 and 41). Additionally, the thesis examined and ruled out the alternative explanations of anticipated regret, uncertainty avoidance, and conformity tendency as mediators as they were found to be non-significant (Table 42, 43, and

44). These results provide support for the elimination of the three selected variables as alternative explanations, lending further credibility to the findings in an academic context.

Table 40 Mediation Effect of Choice Confidence (Potential Mediator 1)

Steps	Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
			β	Std.Error	Beta		
DV: Purchase Intention (Complete mediation)							
STEP 1 (Path A)	SK	Choice Confidence	.454	.081	.308	5.584	<.001
$R^2=.095, F=31.184^{***} <.001$							
STEP2 (Path B)	SK	Purchase Intention	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014
$R^2=.020, F=6.097^{***} =.014$							
STEP3 (Path C)	SK (IV)	Purchase Intention	.037	.051	.041	0.718	.473
	Choice Confidence (M)		.199	.035	.326	5.691	<.001
$R^2=.116, F=19.564^{***} <.001$							

Table 41 Mediation Effect of Justifiability (Potential Mediator 2)

Steps	Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
			β	Std.Error	Beta		
DV: Purchase Intention (Complete mediation)							
STEP 1 (Path A)	SK	Justifiability	.205	.065	.179	3.134	.002
$R^2=.032, F=9.821^{***} =.002$							
STEP2 (Path B)	SK	Purchase Intention	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014
$R^2=.020, F=6.097^{***} .014$							
STEP3 (Path C)	SK (IV)	Purchase Intention	.076	.050	.085	1.536	.126
	Justifiability (M)		.247	.043	.316	5.705	<.001
$R^2=.117, F=19.643^{***} <.001$							

Table 42 Mediation Effect of Anticipated Regret (Alternative Explanation 1)

Steps	Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
			β	Std.Error	Beta		
DV: Purchase Intention (No mediation)							
STEP 1 (Path A)	SK	Anticipated Regret	-.136	.063	-.124	-2.157	.032
$R^2=.015, F=4.654^{***} .032$							
STEP2 (Path B)	SK	Purchase Intention	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014
$R^2=.020, F=6.097^{***} .014$							
STEP3 (Path C)	SK (IV)	Purchase Intention	.116	.052	.129	2.241	.026
	Anticipated Regret (M)		-.083	.047	-.101	-1.758	.080
$R^2=.030, F=4.615^{***} .011$							

Table 43 Mediation Effect of Uncertainty Avoidance (Alternative Explanation 2)

Steps	Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
			β	Std.Error	Beta		
DV: Purchase Intention (No mediation)							
STEP 1 (Path A)	SK	Uncertainty Avoidance	-.161	.048	-.191	-3.355	<.001
$R^2 = .036, F = 11.259^{***} < .001$							
STEP2 (Path B)	SK	Purchase Intention	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014
$R^2 = .020, F = 6.097^{***} = .014$							
STEP3 (Path C)	SK (IV) Uncertainty Avoidance (M)	Purchase Intention	.121 -.035	.052 .062	.135 -.033	2.314 -.559	.021 .577
$R^2 = .021, F = 3.198^{***} = .042$							

Table 44 Mediation Effect of Conformity Tendency (Alternative Explanation 3)

Steps	Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
			β	Std.Error	Beta		
DV: Purchase Intention (No mediation)							
STEP 1 (Path A)	SK	Conformity Tendency	-.083	.040	-.121	-2.102	.036
$R^2 = .015, F = 4.419^{***} .036$							
STEP2 (Path B)	SK	Purchase Intention	.127	.051	.142	2.469	.014
$R^2 = .020, F = 6.097^{***} .014$							
STEP3 (Path C)	SK (IV) Conformity Tendency (M)	Purchase Intention	.123 -.044	.052 .075	.138 -.034	2.378 -.580	.018 .562
$R^2 = .021, F = 3.210^{***} = .042$							

After that, using Hayes model 6, the serial mediation effect of two mediators between subjective knowledge and purchase intention were tested. As a result, the inclusion of bootstrap analysis resulted in an improved model fit, indicating that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R = .308, R\text{-sq} = .095, \text{MSE} = 3.068, p = .000$). Additionally, it was revealed that there is a serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability (subjective knowledge \rightarrow Choice Confidence \rightarrow Justifiability \rightarrow Purchase Intention). Table 45 shows the serial mediating association of choice confidence and justifiability.

Table 45 Serial Mediation Effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability

Path	B	se	t	p	Bootstrapping 95% CL		Conclusion
					LLCI	ULCI	
Subjective Knowledge → Choice Confidence	.454	.081	5.584	.000	.149	.398	Complete mediation
Subjective Knowledge → Justifiability	-.008	.056	-.136	.892	-.118	.103	
Choice Confidence → Justifiability	.469	.038	12.337	.000	.394	.544	
Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	.038	.051	.751	.453	-.062	.138	
Choice Confidence → Purchase Intention	.125	.042	2.955	.003	.042	.209	
Justifiability → Purchase Intention	.157	.053	2.979	.003	.053	.260	

4.1.4.3.10 Main Test Analysis Results 7: Moderation Effect of VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict) on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention Serially Mediated with Choice Confidence and Justifiability

This section aims to test hypothesis 7 with the purpose of investigating the existence of the moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) in the relationship between subjective knowledge on purchase intention that is mediated with choice confidence and justifiability serially. A mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation process macro model was used in SPSS (Model 83) for the analysis.

The result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R=.323$, $R\text{-sq}=.104$, $MSE=3.057$, $p=.000$). However, the result of model 83 showed a non-significant interaction effect between the independent variable subjective knowledge and moderator VCLs synchronicity (conflict) on purchase intention ($\beta=-.136$; $se=.098$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.330;.058]$, $p=0.167$).

4.1.4.3.11 Main Test Analysis Results 8: Moderated Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity (Conflict) through VCLs Synchronicity (Conflict) between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention Serially Mediated with Choice Confidence and Justifiability

The purpose of this study is to test hypothesis 8 investigating the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs synchronicity (conflict) between the relationship of subjective knowledge and choice confidence.

Hayes Model 3 was employed to assess the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) on the relationship between subjective knowledge and choice confidence, considering the absence of an existing process macro model capable of accommodating a research model featuring two moderators and two serial mediators. Model 3 incorporates subjective knowledge as an independent variable, choice confidence as a dependent variable, and employs VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and CLs synchronicity (conflict) as moderators and moderated moderators, respectively. Having previously established the serial mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability, the demonstration of a causal relationship between subjective knowledge (IV) and choice confidence (DV) with the moderated moderation effect of CLs through VCLs lends support to the notion that the full conceptual framework is valid.

The sample consists of 300 participants, and a moderated moderation analysis was conducted using PROCESS procedure in SPSS (Model 3) with bootstrap resampling of 5000 samples to estimate confidence intervals. The result obtained using 5000 bootstrap samples reveals that the suggested model is statistically significant ($R=.364$, $R\text{-sq}=.132$, $MSE=3.001$, $p=.000$) showing better model fit compare to the model without the intervention of CLs synchronicity (conflict) as a moderated moderator. The result of model 3 showed a non-significant moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) between subjective knowledge and choice confidence ($\beta=-.171$; $se=.125$, $CI\ 95\ \% = [-.417; .075]$, $p=.171$).

4.1.4.3.12 Extra Test Analysis Results 9: Moderation Effect of CLs Synchronicity (Conflict) on the Relationship between Subjective Knowledge and Purchase Intention Serially Mediated with Choice Confidence and Justifiability

Study 1 and Study 2 established the existence of a moderating effect of VCLs synchronicity, and Study 3 demonstrated the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity. In contrast, the preceding part of Study 4 has confirmed that both moderation effects of VCLs synchronicity (conflict), and moderated moderation effects of CLs synchronicity (conflict) do not exist. However, it is noteworthy that the impact of CLs has been underscored in Section 4.1.4.3.10 within the context of Study 4, where the intervention of both VCLs conflict and CLs conflict and mediators has been examined. Therefore, the direct moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) was tested as an extra examination to gain deeper insight into the relationships among the variables, although it was not posited as a hypothesis in this thesis.

For the analysis, the PROCESS procedure in SPSS using model 83 with bootstrap resampling of 5000 samples was conducted with 300 respondents. It was found that the inclusion of bootstrap analysis has led to an improved model fit compared to the model that solely

described the relationship between subjective knowledge, purchase intention, and two mediators. Specifically, the improved model indicated a statistically significant relationship with an R-value of .599, R-squared of .359, mean squared error (MSE) of 1.321, and p-value of .000, while the original model without a moderator of CLs synchronicity (conflict) showed an R-value of .309 and R-squared of .095. Thus, the suggested model with CLs synchronicity (conflict) as a moderator is deemed to have a stronger and more significant relationship between the variables in the model.

The analysis result also confirmed the moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) ($\beta=.264$; $se=.100$, CI 95 %=[.068; .460], $p=.008$). The post-hoc analysis result examined the conditional effects of CLs synchronicity (conflict) on the path (subjective knowledge - choice confidence - justifiability - purchase intention) showed a significant conditional effects for the cases (a) positive CLs synchronicity (effect=.054, $se=.021$, CI 95 %= [.017; .098]) and (b) CLs conflict (effect =.034, $se=.014$, CI 95 %= [.011; .063]). Table 46 summarised the results.

Table 46 Analysis Results of Conditional Effect of CLs Synchronicity (Positive vs Negative) and CLs Conflict on Purchase Intention in Study 4

	Positive CLs Synchronicity	Negative CLs Synchronicity	CLs Conflict
Purchase Intention	Significant (+) effect=.054; $se=.021$, CI 95 %= [.017; .099]	Non-significant	Significant (+) effect=.034, $se=.014$, CI 95 %= [.011; .063]

Interpreting the results cautiously, it appears that when excluding VCLs and considering CLs as the sole moderating variable in the relationship of subjective knowledge - choice confidence - justifiability - purchase intention, it exhibited statistical significance. This suggests the possibility that CLs exert a more pronounced influence than VCLs in shaping consumers' subjective knowledge, choice confidence, and justifiability, ultimately impacting their intention to purchase novel products. Comprehensive results of Study 4 are suggested in Table 47.

Table 47 Comprehensive Results Summary of Study 4

	Path			Direct Effect	Moderators	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect	
H1a	Subjective Knowledge (SK)	→		Purchase Intention					
				Significant (+)					
H2b	Subjective Knowledge	→		Purchase Intention	VCLs Synchronicity	SK SK*VCLs Synchronicity	Non-significant Significant (-)	Negative VCLs (+)	
H3	Subjective Knowledge	→		Purchase Intention	VCLs Conflict	SK SK *VCLs Conflict	Non-significant		
H4b	Subjective Knowledge	→		Purchase Intention	VCLs Synchronicity * CLs Synchronicity	SK SK *VCLs Synchronicity SK*VCLs Synchronicity *CLs Synchronicity	Non-significant Significant (-) Significant (-)	Positive VCLs *Negative CLs (+)	
H5	Subjective Knowledge	→		Purchase Intention	VCLs (3 levels) * CLs (3 levels)	SK SK*VCLs SK*VCLs*CLs	Non-significant Significant (-) Significant (-)	Negative VCLs*Conflicting CLs (+) Negative VCLs * Positive CLs (+)	
H6	Subjective Knowledge	→	Choice Confidence	→	Justifiability	→	Purchase Intention	Significant (+)	
H7	Subjective Knowledge	→	Choice Confidence	→	Justifiability	→	Purchase Intention	VCLs (3 levels) SK SK *VCLs Significant Non-significant	
H8	Subjective Knowledge	→		Choice Confidence	VCLs (3 levels) * CLs (3 levels)	SK SK*VCLs SK*VCLs*CLs	Significant Non-significant Non-significant		
Extra	Subjective Knowledge	→	Choice Confidence	→	Justifiability	→	Purchase Intention	CLs (3 levels) SK SK *CLs Non-significant Significant (+)	Conflict CLs (+) Positive CLs (+)

Table continues

Hypotheses Results		
H1a	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have higher (lower) purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products.	Accepted
H2b	The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the product evaluation of novel products will be moderated by VCLs synchronicity, such that positive (negative) synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.	Partially Accepted
H3	The effect of consumers' subjective knowledge on the purchase intention of novel products will be moderated by VCLs conflict, such that VCLs conflict will lead to positive outcomes.	Rejected
H4b	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes.	Partially Accepted
H5	The moderating effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that, when VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.	Partially Accepted
H6	Consumers with higher (lower) subjective knowledge about novel products will have a significant indirect effect on purchase intention towards the corresponding novel products through serial mediation of choice confidence and justifiability.	Accepted
H7	The mediation effect of choice confidence and justifiability between the relationship of consumers' subjective knowledge and purchase intention related to novel products will be further moderated by VCLs, such that positive (negative) VCLs synchronicity will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs are in conflict, the moderating effect will be positive.	Rejected
H8	The moderation effect of VCLs on the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and choice confidence related to novel products will be further moderated by CLs, such that that when there is positive (negative) synchronicity between VCLs and CLs, it will lead to positive (negative) outcomes. When VCLs and CLs are in conflict, the primacy of CLs will prevail.	Rejected

4.1.4.4 Findings

Overall, the results of Study 4 reaffirm the findings of the previous studies. For instance, the direct effect of subjective knowledge on purchase intention found in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 was also found in Study 4, supporting H1a. The moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity between subjective knowledge and behavioural intentions found in Study 1 and Study 2 was found in Study 4 again, partially supporting H2b. The moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity found in Study 3 was found in Study 4 as well, partially supporting H4b. Additionally, Study 4 confirmed that the relationship of subjective knowledge and purchase intention is serially mediated by choice confidence and justifiability, partially supporting H6.

In contrary, Study 4 revealed there is no moderation effect of VCLs conflict between subjective knowledge and purchase intention, rejecting H3. H7 and H8 were also rejected confirming that there are no moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs Synchronicity (conflict) on the relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention that is serially mediated with choice confidence and justifiability. However, through the additional finding through extra analysis, it was able to observe that CLs still has powerful impact when there is intervention of conflicting logics in both virtual communities and corporations and mediating effects of choice confidence and justifiability.

Based on the findings of Study 4, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables of interest in this thesis was obtained. These findings have important implications that can contribute to theoretical advancements and practical applications in the field. First, the reaffirmation of the direct effect of subjective knowledge in Study 4 emphasises the significance of enhancing consumers' subjective knowledge of novel products in order to increase their purchase intention. This finding implies that the extent to which consumers perceive themselves as having substantial knowledge about the novel product has a significant impact on their actual intention to make a purchase.

Second, the results of Study 4 demonstrate the importance of VCLs synchronicity between subjective knowledge and consumers' purchase intention especially in case of when there is a negative VCLs synchronicity. The results obtained in Study 4 are consistent with the argument proposed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, that is, consumers with higher subjective knowledge may tend to deny the negative views within virtual communities as a way to avoid a psychologically uncomfortable information when they confront the information that they do

not agree. They tend to maintain a favourable attitude towards novel products by resisting accepting negative information as they may think they have enough knowledge not to be agitated by the public, therefore place less weight on the negative logics emerged within virtual communities. While virtual communities play a significant role in shaping individuals' behaviour regarding novel products through its logics, individuals with high subjective knowledge are less likely to be influenced by these communities when it comes to their behaviour.

Third, the study results suggest the importance of choice confidence and justifiability as mediators between subjective knowledge and purchase intention. This is consistent with the argument of this thesis, that ILs affect individuals to form their confidence in their decision-making and it also help to justify their behavioural intentions.

Finally, although the moderation of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) and the moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs synchronicity (conflict) was not found, extra analysis in Study 4 found that CLs has a positive moderation effect on consumers' purchase intention, upon excluding the impact of VCLs synchronicity (conflict). This implies that corporations may have more power than virtual communities in enhancing consumers' subjective knowledge and choice confidence, impacting their purchase intention through the perception of justifiability. To summarise, these findings suggest that CLs serve as an important source for consumers to enhance their subjective knowledge and choice confidence, which ultimately influences their purchase intention. This underscores the significance of corporations' communication and interventions in shaping consumers' perceptions and behaviors in the context of novel products.

A comprehensive summary of all the hypotheses tested in this thesis is presented in Table 48. The table includes details such as the variables involved, references to specific hypotheses and studies, the study context, and the results of significance and conditional effects. Following the summary of hypotheses, Chapter 5 discusses the collective findings of the studies drawing upon the overall results obtained from the four experimental studies conducted in this thesis. Chapter 5 also explores the theoretical and managerial implications of these findings, highlighting their significance in the field of consumer behaviour and marketing. Additionally, the key findings and limitations of the thesis will be presented in more detail to guide future research endeavours.

4.2 Results Summary of Thesis

Table 48 Comprehensive Results Summary of Thesis

Study	Aim	Hypothesis	Study Context	Path	With	Significance	Interaction Effect on DV	Significance	Conditional Effect
S1	Direct effect of Subjective Knowledge (SK) on Purchase Intention	H1a	Heat Pumps	Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention		Significant (+)			
	Direct effect of SK on Product Evaluation	H1b		Subjective Knowledge → Product Evaluation		Significant (+)			
	Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK on Purchase Intention	H2a		Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	VCLs Synchronicity		SK	Significant (+)	
							SK*VCLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	Negative VCLs Synchronicity (+)
Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK on Product Evaluation	H2b	Subjective Knowledge → Product Evaluation	VCLs Synchronicity		SK	Significant (+)			
					SK*VCLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	Negative VCLs Synchronicity (+)		
S2	Direct effect of SK on Adoption Procrastination	H1c	Smart Valve Radiators	Subjective Knowledge → Adoption Procrastination		Significant (-)			
	Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK on Adoption Procrastination	H2c		Subjective Knowledge → Adoption Procrastination	VCLs Synchronicity		SK	Significant (-)	
			SK*VCLs Synchronicity			Significant (-)	Positive VCLs Synchronicity (-)		

Study	Aim	Hypothesis	Study Context	Path	With	Significance	Interaction Effect on DV	Significance	Conditional Effect
S3	Direct effect of SK on Product Interest	H1d	Electric Vehicles	Subjective Knowledge → Product Interest		Significant (+)			
	Moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) through VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK and Product Interest	H4a		Subjective Knowledge → Product Interest	VCLs Synchronicity * CLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	SK	Significant (+)	Negative VCLs Synchronicity * Positive CLs Synchronicity (+) Positive VCLs Synchronicity * Negative CLs Synchronicity (+)
			SK *VCLs Synchronicity				Non-significant		
			SK *VCLs Synchronicity *CLs Synchronicity				Significant (-)		
	Sole moderated moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK and Product Interest when CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) exist	Extra analysis	Electric Vehicles	Subjective Knowledge → Product Interest	VCLs Synchronicity	Non-Significant			
Sole moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK and Product Interest when VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) exist	Extra analysis	Electric Vehicles	Subjective Knowledge → Product Interest	CLs Synchronicity	Non-Significant				

Study	Aim	Hypothesis	Study Context	Path	With	Significance	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect
S4	Direct effect of SK on Purchase Intention	H1a	Heat Pumps	Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention		Significant (+)			
	Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK on Purchase Intention	H2a		Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	VCLs synchronicity		SK	Non-significant	Negative VCLs Synchronicity (+)
							SK *VCLs synchronicity	Significant (-)	
	Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity (conflict) between SK and Purchase Intention	H3		Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	VCLs Conflict		SK	Significant (+)	
							SK *VCLs Conflict	Non-significant	
	Moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) through VCLs synchronicity (positive vs negative) between SK and Purchase Intention	H4b		Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	VCLs synchronicity * CLs synchronicity		SK	Non-significant	
							SK *VCLs synchronicity	Significant (-)	
							SK *VCLs synchronicity *CLs Synchronicity	Significant (-)	
	Moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs synchronicity (conflict) between SK and Purchase Intention	H5		Subjective Knowledge → Purchase Intention	VCLs (3 levels) * CLs (3 levels)		SK	Non-significant	Negative VCLs Synchronicity * CLs Conflict (+)
							SK*VCLs	Significant (-)	
							SK*VCLs*CLs	Significant (-)	

Study	Aim	Hypothesis	Study Context	Path	With	Significance	Interaction Effect	Significance	Conditional Effect
S4	A serial mediation effect of Choice Confidence and Justifiability between SK and Purchase Intention	H6	Heat Pumps	Subjective Knowledge → Choice Confidence → Justifiability → Purchase Intention		Significant (+)			
	Moderation effect of VCLs synchronicity and conflict on the relationship between SK and Purchase Intention that is serially mediated with Choice Confidence and Justifiability.	H7		Subjective Knowledge → Choice Confidence → Justifiability → Purchase Intention	VCLs (3 levels)		SK	Significant	
	Moderated moderation effect of CLs synchronicity (conflict) through VCLs synchronicity (conflict) between SK and Choice Confidence	H8		Subjective Knowledge → Choice Confidence	VCLs (3 levels) * CLs (3 levels)	SK	Significant		
						SK*VCLs	Non-significant		
Sole moderation effect of CLs synchronicity and conflict on the relationship between SK and Purchase Intention that is serially mediated with Choice Confidence and Justifiability when VCLs synchronicity (conflict) exists	Extra analysis	Justifiability → Choice Confidence → Justifiability → Purchase Intention	CLs (3 levels)		SK	Non-significant		CLs Conflict (+) Positive CLs Synchronicity (+)	

Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological contributions of the thesis, as well as managerial implications inferred from the contextual contribution achieved in this thesis. The research contributions and implications discussed in this chapter will be drawn from the results and findings obtained from the four experimental studies conducted in the thesis. The study findings will be interpreted and compared with the existing literature reviewed in the earlier sections of the thesis. Finally, research limitations and future research directions will be discussed to provide insights for future studies as well as to improve the overall validity and generalisability of the findings.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis pushes the frontiers of understanding across diverse disciplines such as management and organisational studies, marketing research, and institutional research, through its examination of the study objectives and research questions described in the initial phase of this thesis. This thesis was initiated with three research objectives (RO): to find fundamental drivers that guide consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products (RO1); to test the role of ILs dynamic emerging from virtual communities and between virtual communities and corporations during the process (RO2); and to identify the underlying psychological mechanisms that mediates consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intentions towards novel products (RO3).

5.1.1 Confirmation of Direct Effect of Consumers' Subjective Knowledge on Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products and Consolidation of Current Discussions in Marketing Literature

Studies 1 to 4 consistently achieve RO1 and validate the assumption made to address RQ1, indicating that consumers' subjective knowledge significantly influences their behavioural intentions toward novel products. Specifically, subjective knowledge is identified as a primary driver in this thesis, with the four experimental studies confirming its direct impact on various types of consumers' behavioural intentions, including purchase intention, product evaluation, adoption procrastination, and product interest. This validation of the direct effect of subjective knowledge on consumers' behavioural intentions reinforces existing marketing literature, highlighting its crucial role in driving consumption of novel products (Moreau et al., 2001; Füller et al., 2008; Fuchs et al., 2010; Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015; Utkarsh et al., 2019).

5.1.2 Confirmation of Impact of VCLs and CLs on Consumers' Behavioural Intentions towards Novel Products and Theoretical Implications for Different Disciplines

RO2 is addressed through a series of online experiments investigating the impact of VCLs on consumers' behavioural intentions, along with the influence of ILs dynamics between virtual communities and corporations on consumers' behavioural intentions. To be specific, the findings of Study 1 revealed that negative VCLs synchronicity has significant positive conditional effects on guiding positive behavioural intentions, such as purchase intention and product evaluation, answering RQ2. Conversely, a significant negative conditional effect for positive VCLs synchronicity on guiding negative behavioural intentions, specifically adoption procrastination, was observed in Study 2, answering RQ3.

These findings highlight the independent role of VCLs in guiding both positive and negative consumers' behavioural intentions, particularly when it comes to the consumption of novel products. These findings carry significant theoretical implications, as they empirically demonstrate the influential role of virtual communities as an institutional order in shaping consumers' behavioural intentions. This finding fills a notable gap not only within management and organisational studies that adapt institutional theory but also in marketing literature, showcasing the potency of virtual communities as an institutional order in shaping various types of individuals' behavioural intentions.

5.1.2.1 The Bottom-up Power of Consumers for Institutional Changes and Novel Products Market and Suggestion of Virtual Communities as a Micro-level Institutional Order

Previous academic research in management and organisational studies has primarily focused on the top-down impact of macro-level institutional orders, such as governments and markets, on organisations (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Lovelace et al., 2018; Pache and Santos, 2021). Consequently, there has been a predominant focus on examining how organisations respond to external pressures, with relatively less attention given to recognising the significance of communities, which is a relatively micro-level institutional order. This perspective diverges from the consistent emphasis found in marketing literature, which emphasises the power of consumers in shaping the business and market landscape (Hagel and Singer, 1999; Labrecque et al., 2013; Kumar, 2018; Flaig and Ottosson, 2022).

The findings in this thesis reveal the significant role of communities, which emerge from individuals' active or passive involvement, representing a lower level of institutional order. By

emphasising the potential of micro-level institutional order (i.e., virtual communities) to influence meso- or macro-level institutional orders (i.e., corporations and markets), this research suggests that consumer communities have a power to shape the broader institutional landscape beyond their impact on consumers' behavioural intentions. This aligns with arguments in marketing literature about the influential role of consumers in shaping businesses and markets (Dolbec and Fischer, 2015; Sundararajan, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2022). Through the findings, this thesis contributes to management, organisational studies, and institutional studies by underscoring the critical importance of recognising communities as a fundamental element in understanding institutional dynamics. It suggests considering their presence and contributions when analysing organisational phenomena within the broader institutional context.

Furthermore, this thesis makes an important contribution by investigating the role of community logics, specifically those formed among community members within virtual environments. Because of the anonymity and flexibility afforded by online platforms, individuals have greater freedom to exercise their power, enabling them to express their opinions without constraints of time and place (Mancinelli, 2020). These unique characteristics of virtual communities help to address a limitation in institutional research, management, and organisational studies, which often attempts to explain the power of individuals for institutional changes by focusing on the concept of institutional entrepreneurs. This perspective tends to view individuals with power and resources as institutional entrepreneurs and depict them as the heroes responsible for initiating institutional change, without fully capturing the power dynamics and influence of individuals within the broader inter-institutional system (Battilana et al., 2009; Qureshi et al., 2016). However, this thesis brings attention to the significance of acknowledging individuals' partial autonomy within the broader societal context through the validation of VCLs based on the characteristic that virtual communities have. Individuals' collective power and influence within the inter-institutional system were highlighted through the examination of how individuals actively shape ILs within virtual communities and internalise them to their cognitive processes and behavioural intentions. This provides a more comprehensive perspective on how individuals contribute to institutional change beyond the traditional focus on institutional entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, this research not only advocates for broadening the scope of community and acknowledging its potential impact at societal levels, but it also recognises the timeliness of the digital age and the need to reassess the definition of community as an institutional order. This study emphasises the changing nature of communities and their role in shaping institutional dynamics by leveraging the advantages offered by virtual environments. It

highlights the importance of re-evaluating traditional conceptions of communities and embracing a more inclusive understanding that encompasses virtual communities and their significant influence in the contemporary landscape.

5.1.2.2 Adoption of the Lens of IL for Understanding of Consumers' Group Behaviour and Assumption of Consumers in Group Dynamic

This thesis makes a notable contribution to the field of marketing by introducing the lens of IL with an empirical approach, which is a pioneering endeavour in marketing literature. The adoption of IL as a theoretical framework is theoretically significant because it provides a distinct perspective on understanding individuals. In particular, in contrast to the traditional marketing research tendency to attribute individuals' behaviour within group dynamics to rational calculation (Levav et al., 2010; Husemann and Luedicke, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2019), IL lens offers an alternative perspective that characterises individuals as bounded rational beings. This perspective recognises that when making decisions, individuals are influenced by the interplay of institutional orders and the dynamics of ILs (Simon, 1957; March and Olsen, 1983; Thornton et al., 2012). The empirical findings of Study 1 and Study 2, which indicate a moderation effect of VCLs on consumer behaviour, align with the assumptions of institutional theorists regarding individuals' bounded rationality.

5.1.2.3 Consumers' Behavioural Intentions Contradicting Institutionalists' Claims

Interestingly, both Studies 1 and 2 found that consumers with higher subjective knowledge are less sensitive to the negatively synchronised VCLs. This finding contradicts the argument put forth by institutional theorists that ILs shape individuals' cognition and behaviour and the dominant ILs will guide individuals' behaviour in a certain direction (Thornton et al., 2012). It implies that, despite the known influence of VCLs in amplifying behavioural intentions towards novel products, individuals have the potential to deviate from prevailing ILs. This demonstrates the complexities of individual decision-making processes and the role of subjective knowledge in moderating the effects of ILs on consumer behaviour. This advances institutional theory and marketing research by expanding the understanding of ILs dynamic and acknowledging their importance as drivers of consumer behaviour.

5.1.2.4 Simultaneous Investigations of the Impact of Multi-Institutional Orders in Response to Existing Academic Calls

The findings of Study 3 contribute significantly to addressing RO2 by delving into the complex dynamics of ILs, particularly examining their interplay between two distinct institutional orders-virtual communities and corporations-and their impact on consumers' behavioural

intentions. In detail, this thesis empirically analysed the impact of the two institutional orders at different levels. In particular, the findings from Study 3 and supplementary analyses unveiled an interaction effect of VCLs and CLs when they coexisted. The coexistence of multiple logics stemming from various institutional orders was found to collectively shape consumers' behavioural intentions in a nuanced and intricate manner, regardless of the specific direction they endorse. This investigation responds to the scholarly discourse highlighted by Thornton et al. (2012), advocating for the examination of institutional orders within an interconnected framework rather than in isolation, recognising their mutual dependence and reciprocal influences.

Furthermore, this research empirically investigates the effects of these two institutional orders across various levels, aligning with Klingbeil et al.'s (2019) recommendation to consider the individual-level impact comprehensively within institutional dynamics. This thesis provides empirical validation of the bidirectional influence between ILs articulated by individuals within virtual communities (including perspectives from forum members and influential figures in the product domain) and those originating within corporate entities. This empirical evidence illuminates the impact of VCLs shaped by individuals and the intricate dynamics of institutional orders on consumers' behavioural intentions, particularly in the context of novel product consumption, viewing individuals and community members as powerful actors for the institutional process.

These findings extend the boundaries of institutional research and marketing literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of the simultaneous consideration of multiple institutional orders across different levels. This thesis underscores the interconnectedness between institutional orders within the consumption context, emphasising their interdependencies and complex interplay.

5.1.3 Exploration of the Psychological Mechanisms of Consumers' Behavioural Intentions in Institutional Context and Potential of the Lens of IL in Marketing Research

This thesis makes a paramount theoretical contribution by adopting a holistic approach, namely, IL, while exploring consumer psychology in order to facilitate a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of consumer behaviour. To be specific, Study 4 and supplementary analysis specifically focused on investigating RO 3 by exploring how psychological factors, namely choice confidence, and justifiability, serve as mediators in the relationship between consumers' subjective knowledge and their behavioural intention towards novel products.

Additionally, the findings indicated that ILs, especially those emerging from corporate environments, have a discernible impact on individuals' choice confidence and justifiability.

The study results of this thesis fill a significant gap in the marketing literature by addressing the underexplored intersection of institutional research and consumer psychology. Indeed, extensive marketing research has made efforts to explore both the internal and external cognitive determinants of consumer behaviour, particularly within the realm of innovative product consumption (Candi et al., 2013; Hofstetter et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2014; Taylor and Noseworthy, 2020). However, there remains a notable gap in adopting a comprehensive lens to fully grasp the nuanced behaviours of individuals, despite the recognition within marketing research that cognition formation is a complex and multifaceted process (Graffeo et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, one of the prominent studies within institutional theory, Thornton et al. (2012) asserted that comprehending ILs necessitates an examination of the psychological factors shaping social actors. Indeed, Thornton et al. (2012) strive to elucidate the fundamental motivations guiding individuals and the processes through which individuals form ILs. They underscore the recognition that individuals' cognition and behaviour are deeply intertwined with both tangible actions and symbolic frameworks. Similarly, while prior research in management and organisational studies has utilised the IL lens to understand the factors driving changes in organisational behaviour, there has been limited acknowledgment of the simultaneous approach of employing ILs and considering individuals as actors in the institutional process who can influence organisational behaviour, despite individuals being integral constituents of organisations (Ashraf et al., 2017; Berggren and Karabag, 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Dahlmann and Grosvold, 2017). Thus, this thesis has addressed these existing gaps by integrating consumer psychology into the lens of IL. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of applying the IL lens in marketing research.

5.1.4 Triumph of Corporations Over Consumer Communities in Novel Product Consumption Decision Making

The foundational tenet of marketing research rested upon the recognition of consumers' market power as an essential premise, underpinning various analytical frameworks and theoretical constructs within the discipline. However, this thesis presents partially contradictory results. Additional analysis in Study 4 indicates that when consumers are exclusively exposed to VCLs, their behaviour is influenced by the dynamics of those VCLs, as observed in Studies 1 and 2. When both CLs and VCLs are present, only CLs have a

significant impact on consumer behaviour, particularly when explaining consumer behaviour with constructs such as choice confidence and justifiability. This suggests that when VCLs and CLs coexist, only CLs have a significant impact on consumer behaviour, especially when the consumer environment is characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity, making it challenging for consumers to make rational decisions, or when they are required to justify their behaviour. This finding partially contradicts the prevailing discourse in the marketing field, which has emphasised the significant influence of consumers' power in the market (Hassan et al., 2016; Kenned and Guzmán, 2016; Chen et al., 2018; Itani, 2020). This may come from the research context of this thesis, which focuses on novel product consumption, but the study's findings still contribute to the field of innovation research by shedding light on the importance of corporations in the diffusion of innovative products. The novelty of this thesis lies in its revelation that, contrary to the traditional emphasis on consumer power in marketing research, such as consumer communities, ILs shown by corporations can emerge as powerful drivers of decision-making for consumers in the context of novel product consumption. This shift in perspective highlights a novel implication within the field, underscoring the significant influence of CLs on consumers' behavioural intentions towards novel products in fostering consumer confidence and legitimacy during the decision-making process.

5.1.5 Suggestion of New Perspective on Conflict for Marketing and Management Literature

Study 4 extended the study scope of the investigation and looked into one more layer of VCLs and CLs—that is, conflicting logics. In contrast to prior marketing research, which portrays conflict as a driver of negative consumption behaviour (Luce, 1998; Kleijnen et al., 2009; Penz and Hogg, 2011), this thesis revealed a contrasting observation. According to Study 4, even when conflicting ILs exist, encompassing both positive and negative VCLs and CLs, positive consumer behaviour can still prevail. This implies that consumers can navigate and reconcile conflicting logics and that conflict does not always result in negative behaviour. According to the study result, despite the presence of conflicting ILs between different institutional orders, consumers were able to make sense of the situation and maintain a positive behaviour. This suggests that, despite the coexistence of contradictory ILs, consumers are not rigidly bound by a single logic but rather demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in their decision-making processes. Furthermore, it implies that other factors, such as subjective knowledge, may play a role in overriding conflicting ILs and driving positive consumer behaviour. This alternative perspective contradicts the prevailing arguments

presented in previous marketing literature, which predominantly emphasised the negative impact of conflict on consumer behaviour (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Levav et al., 2010; Husemann and Luedicke, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2019; Markauskaitė and Rūteliūnė, 2022). By offering a contrasting perspective, this research opens up new avenues for examining conflicts not solely as inhibiting factors but as potential catalysts for novel insights and alternative approaches to consumer decision-making. Consequently, this perspective invites scholars to explore the positive aspects and potential benefits that may arise from conflicts, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of their role in shaping consumer behaviour.

Furthermore, organisation and management studies viewed IL conflict as a potential crisis, believing that it harms the effective organisation management, legitimacy maintenance and long-term survival (Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011; Pache and Santos, 2013; Besharov and Smith, 2014; Thornton et al., 2012; Gümüşay and Morris, 2020). However, the findings of this thesis provide a new perspective that extends beyond the traditional understanding of IL conflicts in organisational and management studies by shedding light on the positive consumer behaviour that can result from conflicting ILs. This study adds a new perspective to the organisational domain by implying that IL conflicts may have the potential for organisations to navigate and leverage these conflicts to drive positive outcomes and enhance their adaptability and resilience at least in novel product business contexts.

5.1.6 A Sublime Attempt at a Methodological Approach

Before concluding this section, it is worth noting that this study represents a methodological breakthrough by conducting experiments. For experimental studies, it incorporated real-world practices related to VCLs and CLs acceptance to measure their impact. This innovative approach involved capturing the dynamics of opinion- and experience-sharing within community members and examining how people perceive and react to VCLs and CLs in real-life situations. By integrating these real-world observations into experimental stimuli, the study aimed to assess the effects of VCLs and CLs on individuals' perceptions and behaviours. This unprecedented attempt in marketing research provides valuable empirical evidence, contributing significantly to the academic field through its exploration of new methodological approaches. This innovative approach enhances the robustness and applicability of research findings, ultimately enriching our comprehension of consumer behaviour and decision-making processes.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This thesis begins by highlighting the challenges associated with the diffusion of novel products despite their potential benefits to individuals, firms, and the general public. Prior to commencing the studies, this thesis identified major contributing factors to this challenge—consumers' subjective knowledge serves as an individual-level factor, while ILs represent external factors that can either facilitate or impede the acceptance of products by consumers. By conducting the investigations on relationships among the constructs interested in and considering the different levels of factors comprehensively and simultaneously, this thesis offers the following important managerial implications for decision-makers in both industry and the public sector.

First and foremost, the research scope of this thesis sheds light on the complex realities that businesses face in the novel product industry. It highlights that consumers are confronted with diverse situations when making decisions about novel product consumption. Individuals in these situations are exposed to various ILs originating from different institutional orders, and they may find themselves situated within multiple institutional contexts simultaneously, depending on their roles and locations. Consequently, how individuals receive the information, norms, and beliefs about novel products may vary significantly. This presents a challenge for marketing managers in novel product industry as they must anticipate the factors and incorporate them into their strategies, as well as determine which sources of influence (i.e., virtual communities or their companies) will be most potent in guiding consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the inherent variability of individuals, such as their different personal traits, adds to the complexity of understanding consumer behaviour in this context. However, the four experimental studies conducted in this thesis examining various scenarios, including different levels of consumers' subjective knowledge and different directions of ILs within and between the two institutional orders (i.e., virtual communities and corporations) give guidance for firms. In addition, the significant effect of VCLs and CLs revealed from the studies gives a clue for policymakers in facilitating novel product diffusion needed for them to explore the generic trend happening in virtual consumer communities and through collaboration with businesses.

For example, the findings of a direct effect of subjective knowledge and an interaction effect of VCLs with subjective knowledge across the four studies suggest that marketers in novel product industry should consider consumers' subjective knowledge and VCLs as important factors in shaping their perceptions and intentions towards their offerings. The findings of Study 1 in particular suggest that consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be more

resilient to negative VCLs and more open to evaluating and purchasing novel products. Therefore, marketers may need to leverage the role of subjective knowledge differently when targeting consumers with different levels of knowledge. Furthermore, Study 1 found that positive VCLs synchronicity had no effect on positive consumers' behavioural intentions, such as purchase intention and product evaluation, implying that marketers may need to focus more on negative conversations to motivate positive attitudinal response among consumers with higher knowledge levels.

In contrast, Study 2 confirmed that higher levels of subjective knowledge are associated with lower levels of adoption procrastination in the context of consumption decisions for novel products. This implies that, even for negative consumer behavioural intentions such as adoption procrastination, consumers' subjective knowledge is important in mitigating it. Furthermore, the negative conditional interaction effect of subjective knowledge and positive VCLs synchronicity on adoption procrastination in Study 2 suggests that marketers may need to focus on creating a positive sense of alignment around novel products within virtual communities to reduce negative consumption behavioural intentions. The findings of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that negative VCLs synchronicity may be effective in enhancing positive consumption behavioural intentions among consumers with higher subjective knowledge, whereas positive VCLs synchronicity may be helpful in attenuating negative consumption behavioural intentions among consumers with higher subjective knowledge.

Considering these results comprehensively, the results underscore a paradoxical scenario wherein there is a perceived necessity to amplify both positive and negative synchronicity in VCLs. This paradox is particularly noteworthy given that placing emphasis on negative synchronicity does not consistently result in negative perceptions among consumers, especially within the context of novel product consumption. This thesis derives managerial implications that, to effectively incorporate this paradox into an efficient marketing strategy for novel product diffusion, managers must comprehensively delve into a crucial intrinsic factor of consumers: subjective knowledge, while understanding the dynamics of VCLs. In other words, individuals with higher subjective knowledge exhibit a proclivity to respond positively to both positive and negative VCL synchronicity. This nuanced response suggests that, rather than exclusively scrutinising and managing the directional attributes of VCLs, managers should concurrently consider the internal characteristics of consumers in conjunction with the direction of VCLs. In essence, it becomes imperative for managerial considerations to extend beyond the mere positive or negative nature of VCLs.

Again, the resolution to this paradox lies in the recognition that consumers with higher subjective knowledge engage with VCLs in a more sophisticated manner. Their inclination is towards a balanced presentation that duly acknowledges both positive and negative facets. This, in turn, leads to a more nuanced and informed decision-making process. Consequently, resolving the paradox necessitates tailoring the VCL strategy to align with the cognitive processes of consumers possessing higher subjective knowledge. Such an approach involves not only acknowledging both positive and negative aspects but also addressing them in tandem to formulate a comprehensive and convincing message.

Meanwhile, according to the results of Study 3, consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be less sensitive to the mismatch between VCLs and CLs, which could lead to increased interest in novel products regardless of the presence of positive or negative logics at either level. While this result acknowledges that consumers with higher subjective knowledge may be less influenced by the mismatch and more open to novel products, Study 4 provides marketing managers with a clear understanding of why this unexpected response can be shown through the underlying consumer psychology that is in line with the importance of ILs for individual's legitimacy establishment argued by institutional theorists (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001).

Extra analysis in Study 4 highlights the importance of psychological mechanisms, such as choice confidence and justifiability, in increasing consumers' purchase intentions for novel products. Specifically, when CLs are positively aligned or conflicting towards novel products in the market, consumers with higher subjective knowledge tend to exhibit higher purchase intention towards novel products through their enhanced choice confidence and justifiability, in turn, legitimacy. The findings again emphasise the importance of legitimacy for behaviour formation—a fundamental concept in institutional theory (Baum and Oliver, 1991; Rao, 1994)—and offer evidence for marketing managers in terms of their product promotion tactics. For example, when they promote their products, giving product information or showing catchy slogans, including messages that justify the product purchase or infuse confidence in the purchase, can help. Furthermore, prioritising the dissemination of positive CLs to consumers by creating a positive product image that boosts consumers' confidence and justifies the use of novel products may be beneficial.

Finally, the additional analysis conducted in Study 4 reveals a sole moderation effect of CLs in the serially mediated psychological mechanisms of consumer subjective knowledge, choice confidence, justifiability, and purchase intention, whereas VCLs does not exhibit the moderating effect. This result provides marketing managers with insight into the

development of effective marketing strategies for resource allocation. For firms having limited resources, rather than investing their resource to promote individuals' positive engagement towards novel products within the virtual community, prioritising the instilling of positive CLs regarding novel products to consumers may be more effective, in situations where complex and conflicting norms exist around novel products in the market, or relatively secured positive awareness of the products from the consumers. Furthermore, policymakers should create a business-friendly environment to encourage consumers to embrace and adopt new products, paving the way for smooth innovation diffusion in the public sector.

Overall, the findings of this thesis emphasise the importance of considering the interplay between consumers' subjective knowledge, virtual community dynamics, and consumers' behavioural intention towards novel product purchase, as well as provide insight into how marketing managers and public can manage and cultivate a sense of alignment about their novel products in virtual communities when targeting consumers with different levels of subjective knowledge. Marketing managers and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to increase consumer acceptance of novel products and foster their successful market diffusion by taking into account both consumers' subjective knowledge and the dynamics of ILs.

5.3 Research Limitation and Directions for Future Research

This thesis makes a significant contribution by empirically confirming the impact of ILs on consumers' behavioural intentions regarding the purchase of novel products. Although this is an exploration not previously ventured, several limitations remain in terms of both research depth or scope and methodological approach. This section discusses research limitations and makes constructive suggestions for future research.

First, the empirical study results of consumers' behavioural intentions in situations where different ILs directions collide or coincide within/between virtual communities and corporations can help marketing managers predict consumer behaviour and develop scenario-specific marketing strategies. However, because the concept of ILs implies that it develops over time and individuals form their cognition and behaviour through prolonged exposure to ILs (Friedland and Alford, 1991), there may still be questions about whether the impact of ILs presented through the stimuli used in the experimental studies of this thesis are deeply embedded and reflected into consumers' behavioural intention when it is measured. However, the two proposed institutional orders in this thesis are situated within the virtual environment and provide distinct advantages in terms of facilitating rapid understanding of

past activities. Indeed, individuals can easily access and review the historical interactions and exchanges among community members in an online setting. This enables them to grasp the collective history and dynamics of the virtual community, allowing for a quicker assimilation of the VCLs designed for the studies. In other words, the accessibility and archival nature of online interactions make them a valuable resource for new members or individuals engaging in the virtual community, allowing them to quickly gain insights into the community's norms, values, and shared beliefs that have developed over time.

Consequently, this efficient process of information retrieval in the virtual environment enables individuals to adapt and align with the prevailing VCLs more swiftly than in physical settings, where accessing past interactions and activities may be more challenging and time-consuming. Despite the beneficial characteristics of the virtual environment in capturing ILs, longitudinal studies or ethnographic studies are recommended as complementary approaches to address this issue in future research.

Second, previous research has shown that purchase motives, such as hedonic or utilitarian, influence consumption behaviour differently based on their distinct heuristics. Although this study focuses on three novel products that are similar to utilitarian products and emphasises the level of novelty achieved through technological advancement, there are also novel products with hedonic value that provide consumers with a unique sensory or emotional experience (Berlyne, 1970; Fiore et al., 2005). According to Liu et al. (2020), who validated apparel with novel designs as a type of novel product, the level of innovativeness and novelty can vary among different types of novel products and can lead to different consumer responses. Although there are sceptical views on hedonic products with a degree of novelty arguing that they hardly penetrate innovative product market success, especially when utilitarian-focused novel products and hedonic-focused novel products are compared (Candi et al., 2016), the hedonic products encompass a certain degree of novelty and may elicit different consumers' behavioural intentions. Therefore, future research should explore various types of novel products with varying motivational factors, levels of innovativeness, and degree of novelty.

Third, because subjective knowledge was the pre-defined research focus, this thesis has primarily focused on subjective knowledge. However, as discussed in section 2.1, there is another type of consumer knowledge, that is, objective knowledge. Because objective knowledge is closely related to subjective knowledge, marketing managers would benefit from considering both types of knowledge, particularly when making accurate decisions for strategy building. For instance, Study 4 in this thesis indicated that the CLs are the crucial source for consumers to enhance the relationship between their subjective knowledge and

choice confidence, which can be connected to purchase intention through justifiability. However, it is unclear whether the measured subjective knowledge is built upon objective knowledge or is generated solely by an individual's self-acknowledgement of the products. Analysing the origin of acquired knowledge and classifying it into two types will help refine the marketing strategy to be implemented. For instance, if subjective knowledge is generated as a result of a combination of objective knowledge, educating consumers with more information may be beneficial in guiding positive consumer behaviour. Contrarily, if subjective knowledge is more based on consumers' familiarity with the products it may be more efficient to increase the level of product exposure through various channels to increase familiarity, as noted by Raju et al. (1995).

Fourth, because the primary focus of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables and to highlight the role of ILs in influencing consumers' behavioural intentions, it did not account for the potential impact of control variables. Furthermore, the small sample size due to resource constraints raised concerns about the inclusion of control variables. However, previous research has revealed that variables such as price consciousness (Lichtenstein et al., 1993; Grewal et al., 2012), curiosity (Kashdan et al., 2014; Gerrath and Biraglia, 2021) and product involvement (Machleit and Wilson, 1988; Hoyer et al., 2010) are influential factors for innovative product choice. Thus, it is recommended that future studies incorporate these variables, which may exert a differential effect in the similar research context of this thesis, to enhance the validity and generalisability of the findings.

Fifth, this research emerges from the exclusion of an individuals' engagement level to virtual communities or product brands. Previous research has found that individuals' relationships and interdependence with virtual communities and corporations play an important role in determining whether to stick to IL conflicts before taking action since individuals tend to establish their identity from the cultural identity of their organisations and groups have (Glynn, 2000; Greenwood et al., 2011; McPherson and Sauder, 2013). Furthermore, consumers who are more loyal to a specific product brand tend to trust the information provided by the company more readily (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Villagra et al., 2021). Therefore, future research should aim to categorise consumers based on their level of participation in virtual communities and corporations and determine whether it produces varying results compared to the findings of this study.

Finally, this thesis acknowledges several limitations in its methodological procedures and external validity. First, the inconsistent use of scales for subjective knowledge across studies

may limit the study's ability to be replicated. The variation in scales used may make comparing and interpreting results across studies difficult. Therefore, future studies should pay special attention to the selection and use of appropriate measurement scales. Second, although this thesis tried to enhance external validity by designing the stimuli as features found in reality, still, the absence of a field study limits the ability to generalise the study findings. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted to support the findings of this thesis through field study and to explain the conceptual model of this thesis with sturdier evidence.

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