

Terror Management Theory

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Introduction

Background of the theory:

- Derived from anthropologist Ernest Becker
- 1973 Pulitzer Prize-The Denial of Death
 - Argues most human action is taken to ignore or avoid the inevitability of death

Hypothesis:

- Terror Management Theory: self-esteem acts to protect one against fearing death
- People who conceptualize their own death will try to counteract these feelings by purchasing high-end products to boost their image and benefit their heirs after death (improving their current condition of self esteem)
- When people are exposed to thoughts of death, and/or dying, they will be more likely to buy luxury items than those who were not exposed to these thoughts



ERNEST BECKER

Secondary Data Study

Results:

243 results on google scholar and 63 of them carried out their own study (26%)

9 out of the 63 studies **support** our theory (14%)



Qualitative Study

Method: Focus Groups

Design: Questionnaire and Discussion

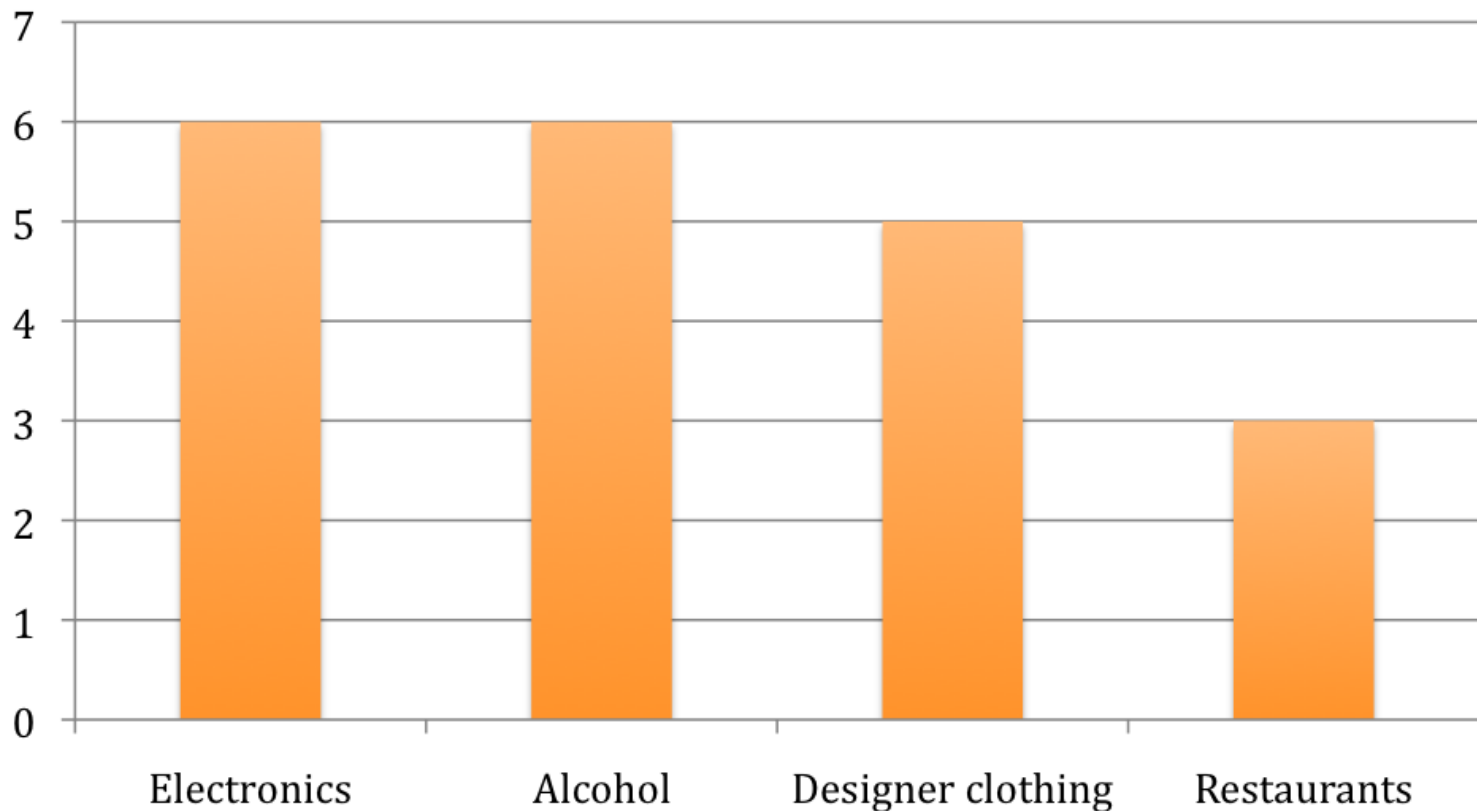
Participants: 14

Questions:



- 1) Do you purchase luxury items? Which ones?
- 2) Have you ever thought about your own death? Why?
Close to death yourself? Relative/friend?
- 3) If you knew you had a year to live, what would you buy?

Which luxury items do you purchase?



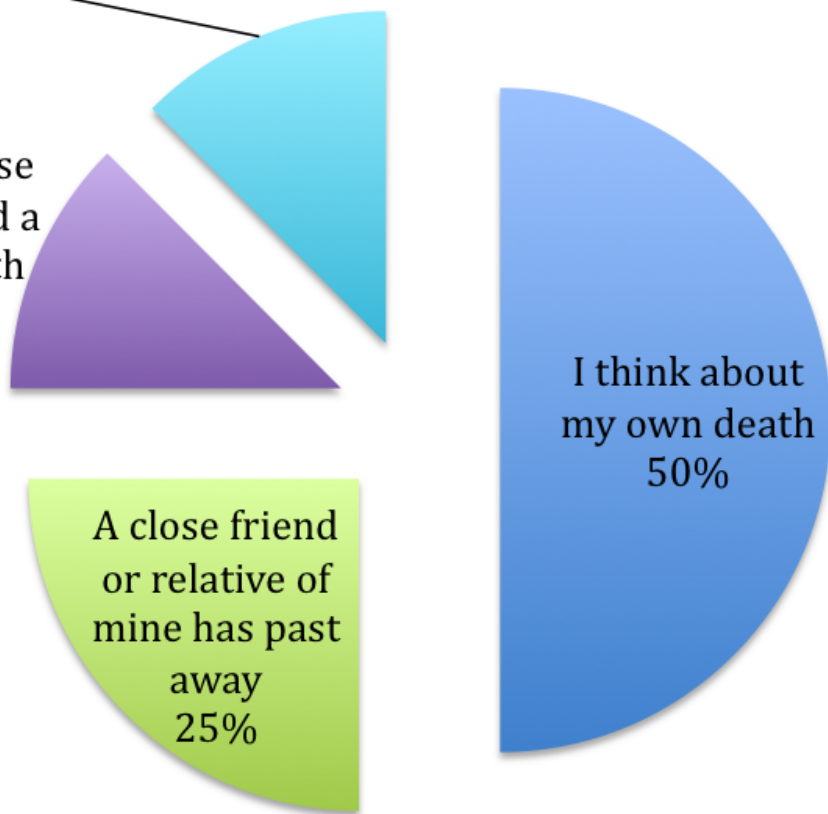
Death Experience

I have had a
close to death
experience
13%

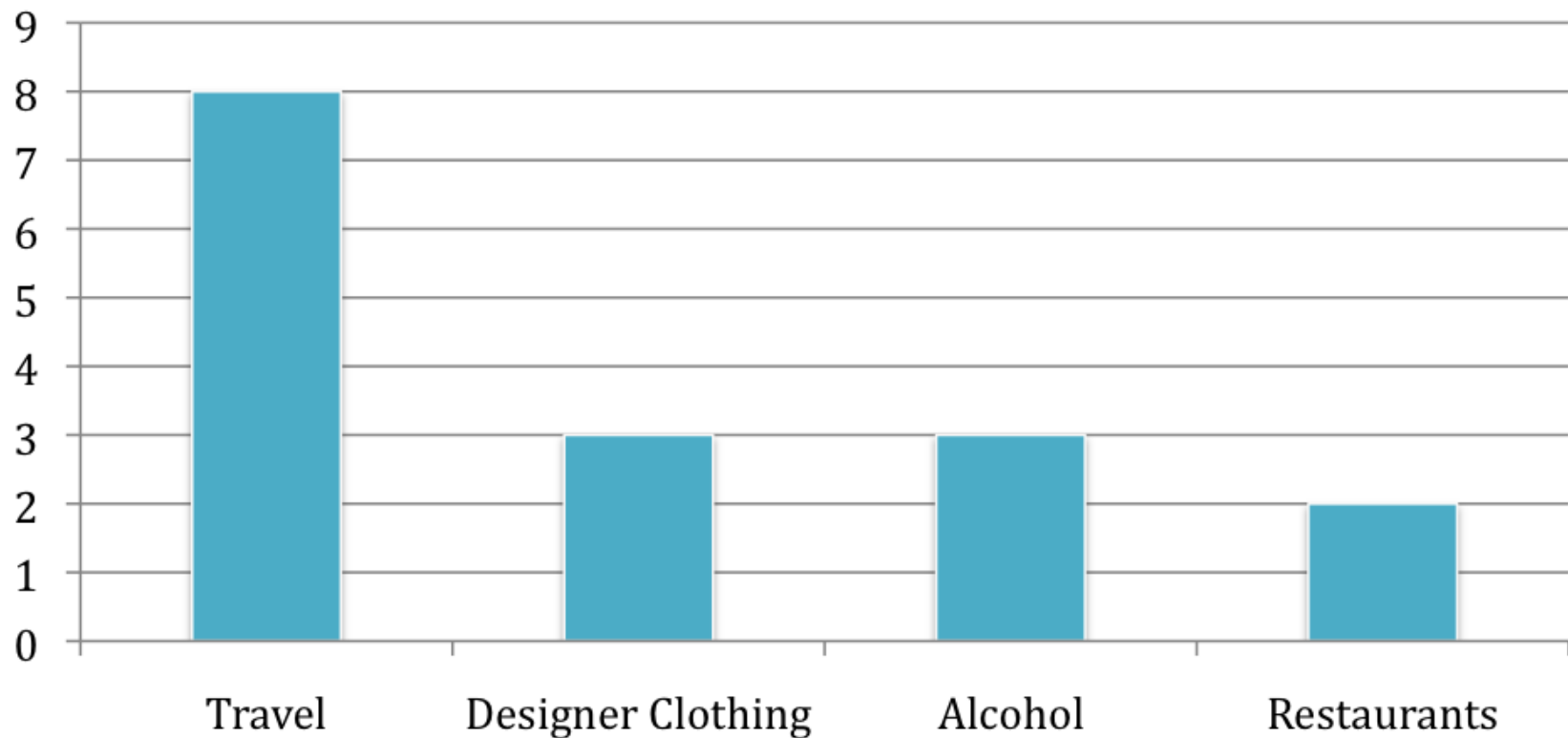
Someone close
to me has had a
close to death
experience
12%

A close friend
or relative of
mine has past
away
25%

I think about
my own death
50%



What would you purchase if you had one year to live?



Quantitative Study

Method: Survey

Participants: 36

Questionnaire/ Experiment:

Control and Treatment Group

Results: Failed to reject hypothesis- there was no significant difference between groups

Rate each brand on a scale of 1-6 (1 being not likely, 6 being very likely) that you would buy this brand while shopping.

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Louis Vuitton | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Hermes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Gucci | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Prada | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Rolex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Chanel | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Cartier | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Burberry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| BMW | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Fendi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Coach | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Michael Kors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Marc Jacobs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Jimmy Choo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Tiffany Co. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Grey Goose | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Audi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Nixon | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Patron | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Hugo Boss | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Calvin Klein | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Versace | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Mercedes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Armani | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Ralph Lauren | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Rayband Sunglasses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| RVCA Clothing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

What is your demographic?

Gender?

Male Female

Please select one of the following age groups?

18-24 25-30 31-35

Ethnicity?

Marital status?

Single Married

Where would you say the majority of your income comes from?

Parents Job Student Loan



LOUIS VUITTON



Quantitative Study

Data from results:

- control group mean=2.2886
- treatment group mean=2.5936

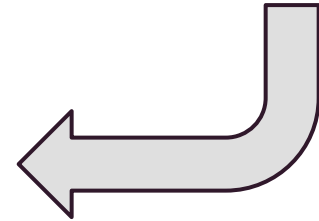
Hypothesis Test:

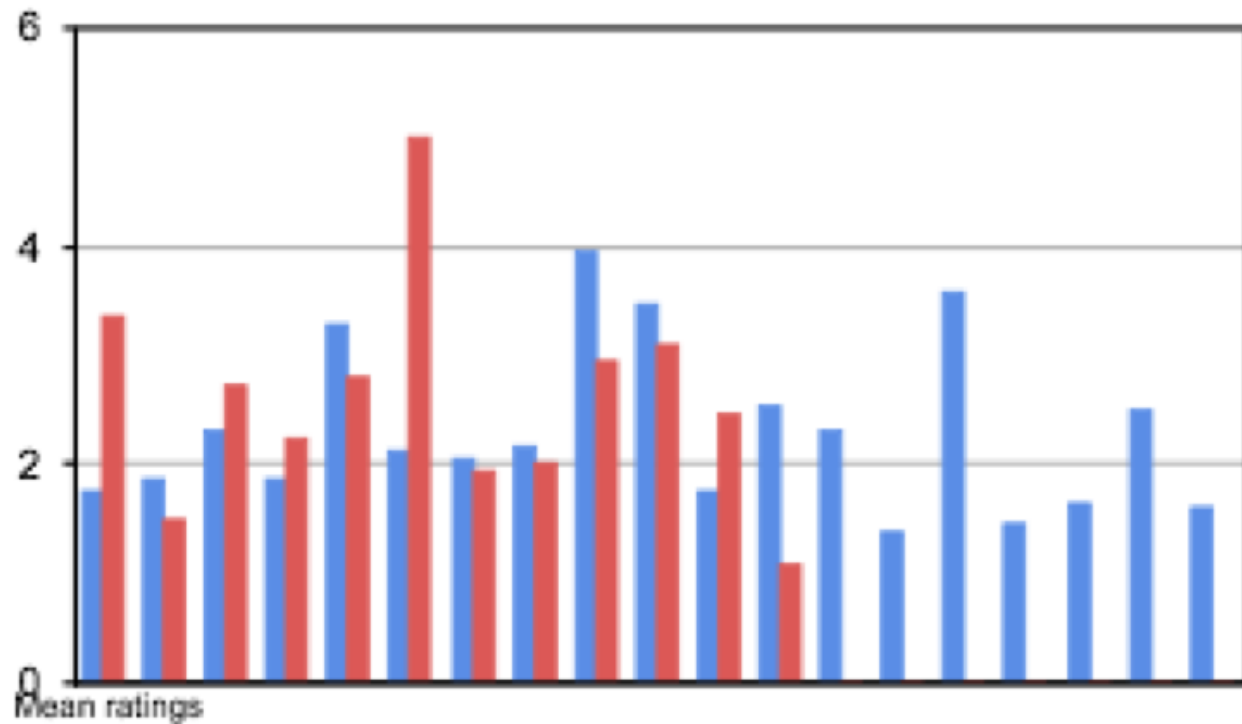
Independent t-test (one tail)

Ho: There is no significance between groups.

Ha: There is a difference between groups. (Treatment group higher)

Determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups.





Treatment
Control

P-value=.1748 > Alpha= .05

NOT SIGNIFICANT!

Summary of the Studies

Secondary Data: Supports theory ✓

Qualitative Data: Supports theory ✓

Quantitative Data: Does not support theory ✗

Limitations of the Studies

Secondary data- articles that were recorded in foreign languages, studies that lacked relevance and availability, and studies that were inaccurate or insufficient

Qualitative data study- limited due to a small sample size, similar demographics among participants, inappropriate moderators, miscommunication, and misinterpretation

Quantitative study- limited due to bias from participants and surveyors, similar demographics, among participants, misinterpretation, small sample size, and a stressful environment.



Theoretical Implications

Even though not significant in this study
Terror Management theory is still...

WHY?

Many limitations
Support from other studies

VALID

Marketing Implications

Use scare tactics for
LUXURY items

Japanese tire commercial

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPSA761eR6I>



+ consumers won't be expecting it as they do with beauty products/anti speeding commercials