

INCREASING COMPLIANCE WITH A REQUEST: TWO
TOUCHES ARE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ONE

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Summary.—Touch procedures have been shown to increase the likelihood of compliance with requests. But the effect of subsequent touches following a classical touch procedure has not been investigated. It was predicted that two touches would lead to more compliance than one touch. 180 male and 180 female bystanders were asked to fill in a short or long questionnaire by a female confederate. They were touched by the confederate either once, twice, or not at all. Results showed that there was more compliance in the two-touch than in the one-touch condition, and when the participants were touched by the confederate. These findings support the hypothesis. Moreover, whereas participants were less likely to fill in the long questionnaire in the no-touch condition, touch procedures led to more compliance whatever the questionnaire length. Also, touch was more effective when a female confederate made the request to a male participant.

Previous literature has demonstrated the positive effect of touch on compliance, starting with Kleinke (1977). In Kleinke's experiment, participants who were lightly touched on the forearm by the experimenter were more likely to give back a lost coin (Study 1) or to lend additional coins following a request (Study 2). The effect of touch increases not only the likelihood of accepting a request but also compliance with a subsequent request (Goldman, Kiyohara, & Pfannensteil, 1985; Hornik, 1987). Regarding cultural differences (cf. Hall, 1966; Remland, Jones, & Brinkman, 1995), these effects are as strong in North American cultures where there is less acceptance of physical contact as there is in contact cultures such as southern Europe (Guéguen, 2001). However, the effects of subsequent touches have not been investigated.

Most of the theoretical explanations for touch rely on the salience of attributes which will increase the request acceptance: positive perception of the requester (Fisher, Rytting, & Heslin, 1976); perception of requester as psychologically or physically closer to the target person (Goldman & Fordyce, 1983; Joule & Guéguen, 2007); touch increasing positive mood states

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(Howard, 1988); awareness of the requester's need is increased (Bohm & Hendricks, 1997); and perceived status of the requester is increased (Guéguen, 2002). A single-touch procedure will increase the salience of the attribute responsible for the acceptance, and consequently, two touches might increase salience further. Thus, a two-touch procedure should lead to more compliance than a one-touch procedure (main hypothesis). More particularly, following a first touch on the forearm at the beginning of a request (one-touch procedure), a second touch on the same place during the request (two-touch procedure) should increase the request acceptance in comparison with a single touch.

In addition, the relevance of the cost of the request acceptance was manipulated. In the literature, a low cost task is more likely to be accepted than a high cost task (e.g., Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Cialdini, Vincent, Lewis, Catalan, Wheeler, & Darby, 1975). Classically, touch experiments show that touch increases acceptance whatever the request cost: low, e.g., to fill in a questionnaire taking 2 or 3 minutes (Guéguen, 2002), or high, e.g., to fill in a long and provocative questionnaire containing 150 questions (Nannberg & Hansen, 1994). Nevertheless, request cost has not been manipulated in the literature. As the touch effect is particularly strong—without a touch procedure a long questionnaire should lead to less acceptance to fill in than a short questionnaire—touch procedures should increase acceptance, whatever the request cost. To explore the role of this factor, the request cost was considered as defined by the questionnaire length.

METHOD

The participants were 360 adults (180 men, 180 women) who were individually approached by a female experimenter in a Parisian train station (La Defense). The experimenter approached each participant coming through a defined area, and they were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions. While participants were walking alone in the station's main hall, they were stopped by the experimenter who asked them to answer a survey: "Excuse me, we are currently conducting a survey on the decoration of the station." In the second part of the request, cost of responding was operationalized by the questionnaire's length. A questionnaire was presented to the participants. Half were asked to fill in a short questionnaire of about a single page (Low Cost condition): "Would you please answer a questionnaire which will take about two minutes?" The other half were asked to fill in a long questionnaire of about 10 pages (High Cost condition): "Would you please answer a questionnaire which will take about 10 minutes?" Following a randomized assignment, while the experimenter asked the participants, either she briefly touched their forearm at the beginning of the request (one-touch procedure), or she touched them a first time at the beginning of the

request and a second time during the request (two-touch procedure), or she didn't touch them at all (no-touch control). Therefore, the study design was a 3 (touch modality: none, one, two) \times 2 (request cost: High, Low) \times 2 (participant's sex) experimental design. No participants actually filled in a questionnaire, and the effects were examined on the participants' willingness to fill in the proposed questionnaire. As the requester was female, and as a sexual asymmetry led to more compliance (e.g., Paulsell & Goldman, 1984; Bohm & Hendricks, 1997; Guéguen & Fischer-Lokou, 2003), it was expected that men would show more compliance than women.

RESULTS

Please refer to Table 1 for frequencies of the main variables analyzed below. Considering the design and in conformity with hypotheses, an analysis of contrasts was conducted on compliance with filling in the questionnaire, using logit analysis. A first contrast corresponded to the paradigmatic touch effect (C_1 : no-touch=2, one-touch=-1, two-touch=-1), whereas a second contrast corresponded to the hypothesis of a better efficiency of the two-touch procedure than the one-touch procedure (C_2 : no-touch=0, one-touch=-1, two-touch=1). The request cost (R) and the participant's sex (S) were centered, and all the interactions between the two contrasts and the variables were considered in the regression analysis. In accordance with Abelson and Prentice (1997), 11 predictors were integrated in the regression (C_1 , C_2 , R, S, C_1R , C_1S , C_2R , C_2S , RS, C_1RS , C_2RS).

TABLE 1
PERCENT ACCEPTANCE OF REQUEST BY TOUCH PROCEDURE AS
FUNCTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE LENGTH OR SEX

	n	Touch Procedure			Total
		No-Touch	One-Touch	Two-Touch	
Questionnaire Length					
Long	60	11.7	41.7	60.0	37.8
Short	60	30.0	43.3	56.7	43.3
Participants' Sex					
Men	60	26.7	50.0	68.3	48.3
Women	60	15.0	35.0	48.3	32.8
Total	120	20.8	42.5	58.3	40.6

Considering the touch procedure, in accordance with the classical touch effect, acceptance of filling in the questionnaire was more frequent in the touch conditions than in the no-touch conditions (50.4% vs 20.8%) (C_1 ; $Wald(1) = 26.49$, $p < .01$, $OR = .60$). Moreover, as expected, the two-touch procedure led to more compliance than the one-touch procedure (42.5% vs 58.3%) [C_2 ; $Wald(1) = 6.16$, $p < .01$, $OR = 1.39$].

Concerning the questionnaire length, no significant effect of questionnaire length was observed [$Wald(1) = 2.45, p = .12, ns, OR = .82$]. Nevertheless, an interaction effect between C_1 and the questionnaire length suggested that, whereas in the no-touch procedure fewer participants accepted filling in the long questionnaire (11.7%) compared to the short questionnaire (30%), the touch procedures increased acceptance whatever the questionnaire length (respectively, for one-touch and two-touch: 41.7% and 60% for the long questionnaire; 43.3% and 56.7% for the short questionnaire) [$C_1R; Wald(1) = 4.85, p < .05, OR = .81$].

Concerning the sex of the participant, in accordance with expectations, there was a main effect for sex [$Wald(1) = 9.38, p < .01, OR = .68$]: more male (48.3%) than female (32.8%) participants accepted filling in the questionnaire. No further effect for sex, questionnaire, or interactions were observed.

DISCUSSION

The current results confirmed the effectiveness of a two-touch procedure compared to a one-touch procedure. In accordance with the hypothesis, a two-touch procedure led to more compliance than a one-touch procedure. Moreover, one-touch and two-touch procedures led to more compliance than a no-touch procedure. From a theoretical point of view, a two-touch procedure could increase the salience of the attributes, which increases the acceptance more than does a one-touch procedure. Further experiments should try to measure the attributes themselves.

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