

Cutting Edge Consumer Research –  
Theoretical Foundations:  
Bringing Recent Developments in Social  
Psychology into Consumer Behavior

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# Three approaches to integrating consumer and social psychology

Approach 1. Replicate research in social psychology using consumer-relevant stimuli

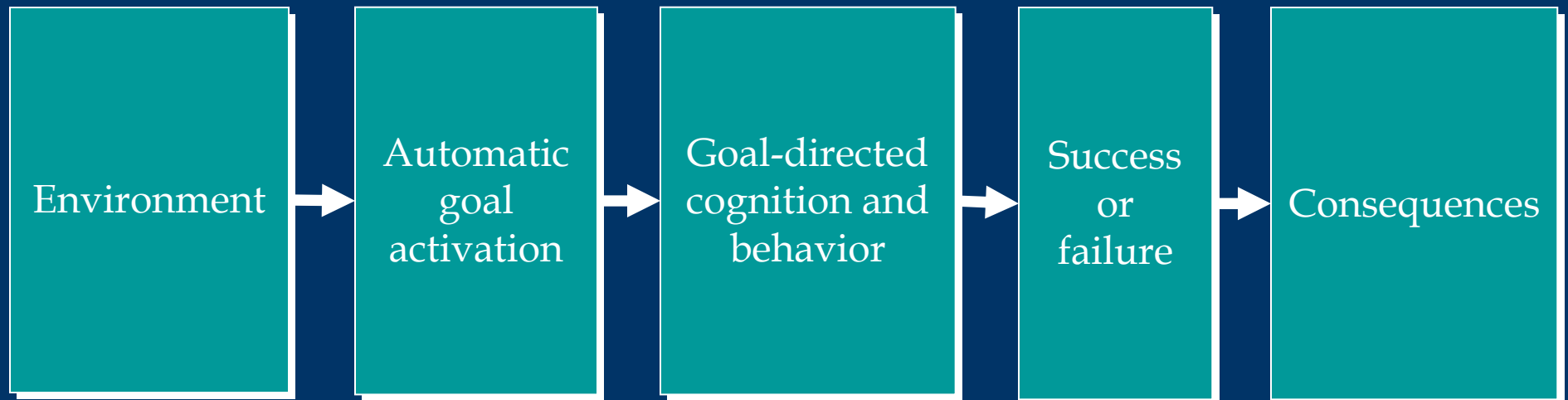
Approach 2. Use methodological tools that have emerged in social psychology to answer theoretical questions of unique interest to consumer researchers

Approach 3. Conduct research of interest to consumer psychologists that contributes theoretically to social psychology

# The Auto-Motive Model (Bargh, 1990)

- Goals are mental representations
- Mental representations can become activated automatically by relevant environmental stimuli
- Thus, goals can be activated nonconsciously
- Once activated, nonconscious goals operate outside of awareness to guide cognition and behavior

# Nonconscious goal pursuit (Chartrand, 1999)



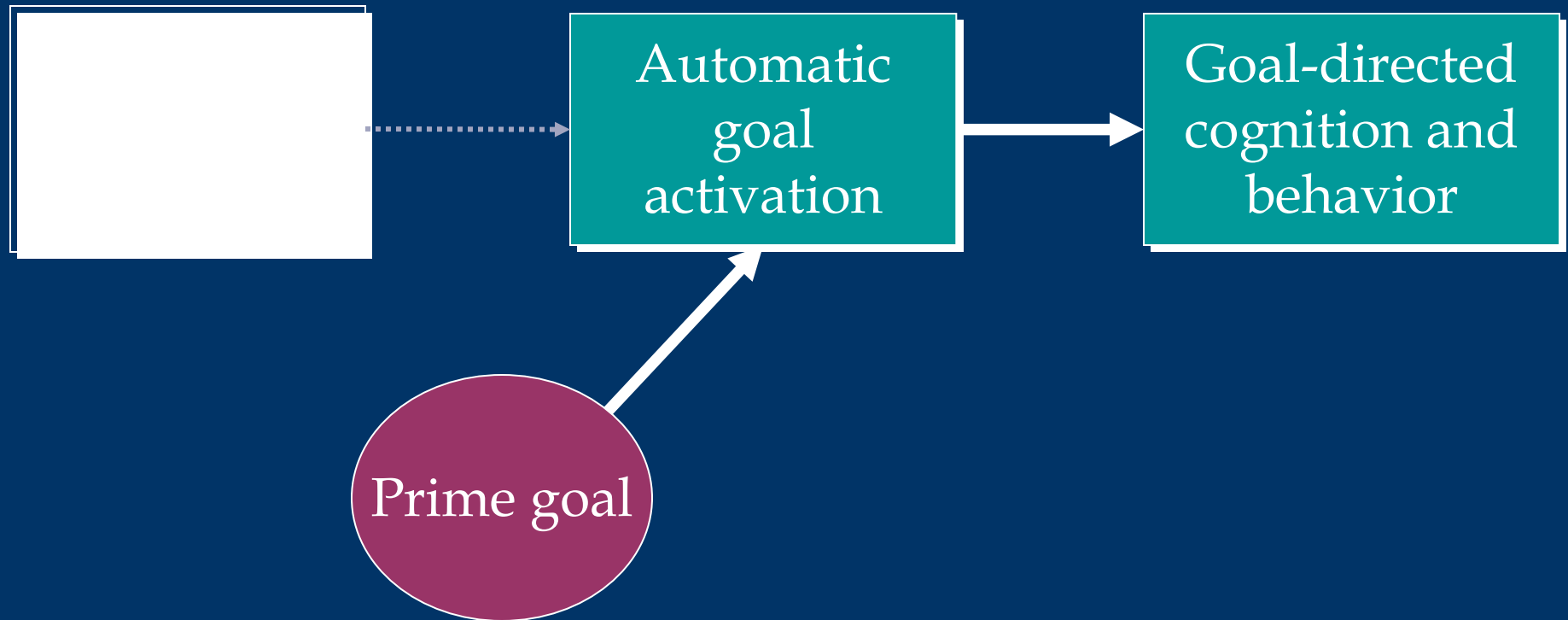
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# Experimental paradigm



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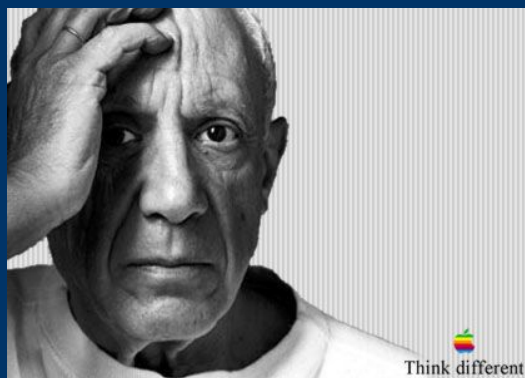
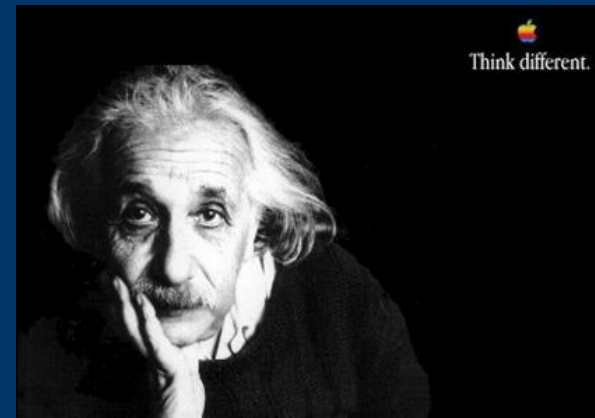
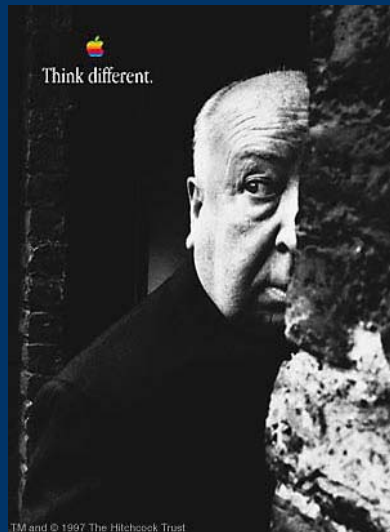
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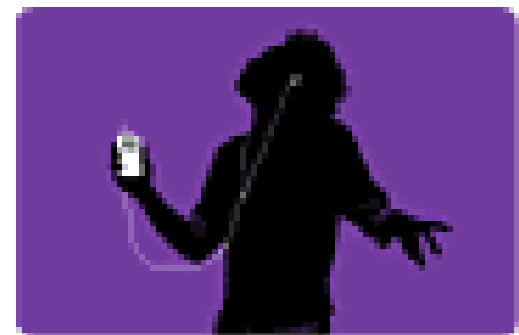
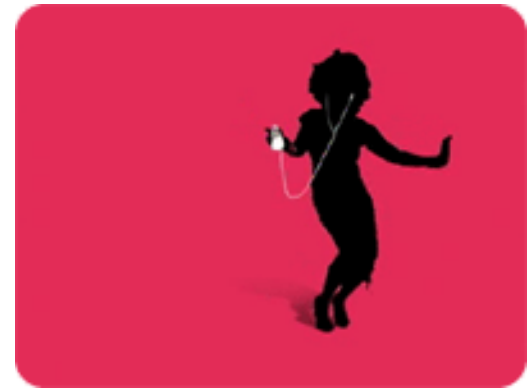
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# Brands as triggers of nonconscious goals

- Brands have personalities (Aaker, 1997)
- Goals may also be associated with these brands
- If so, then can brands activate corresponding goals in individuals?

# Apple's construction of a creative brand personality





# Method

- Ps subliminally primed with Apple logo, IBM logo, or control pattern between subjects
- Given standard creativity measure: brick use task
- DVs: (a) number of different uses identified, (b) creativity of uses as coded by team of judges, (c) uniqueness of uses as coded by judges

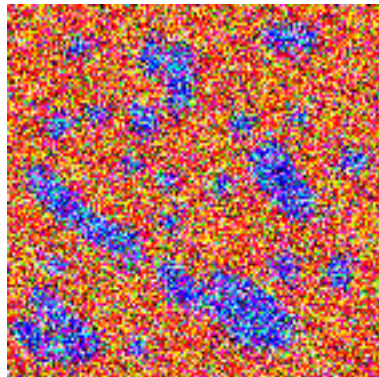
*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, in prep)*

# Subliminal Priming Task

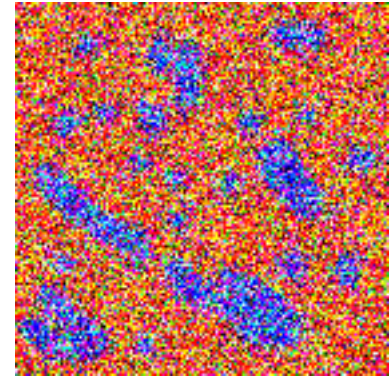
- Asked to do perform two tasks simultaneously
  - Identify whether the box appears to the left or right of center
  - Keep running count of the numbers in the middle of the screen
- What they saw...

*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, in prep)*

2



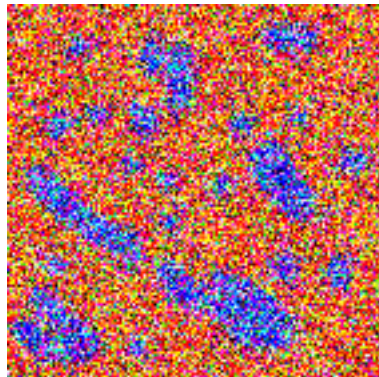
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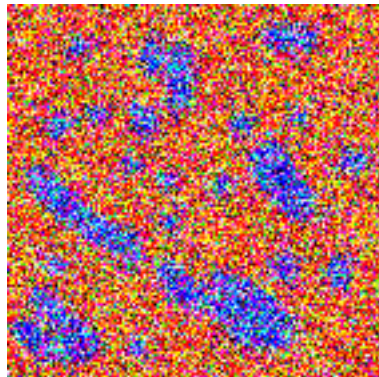
# Brand relationship study

- What they actually saw...

2







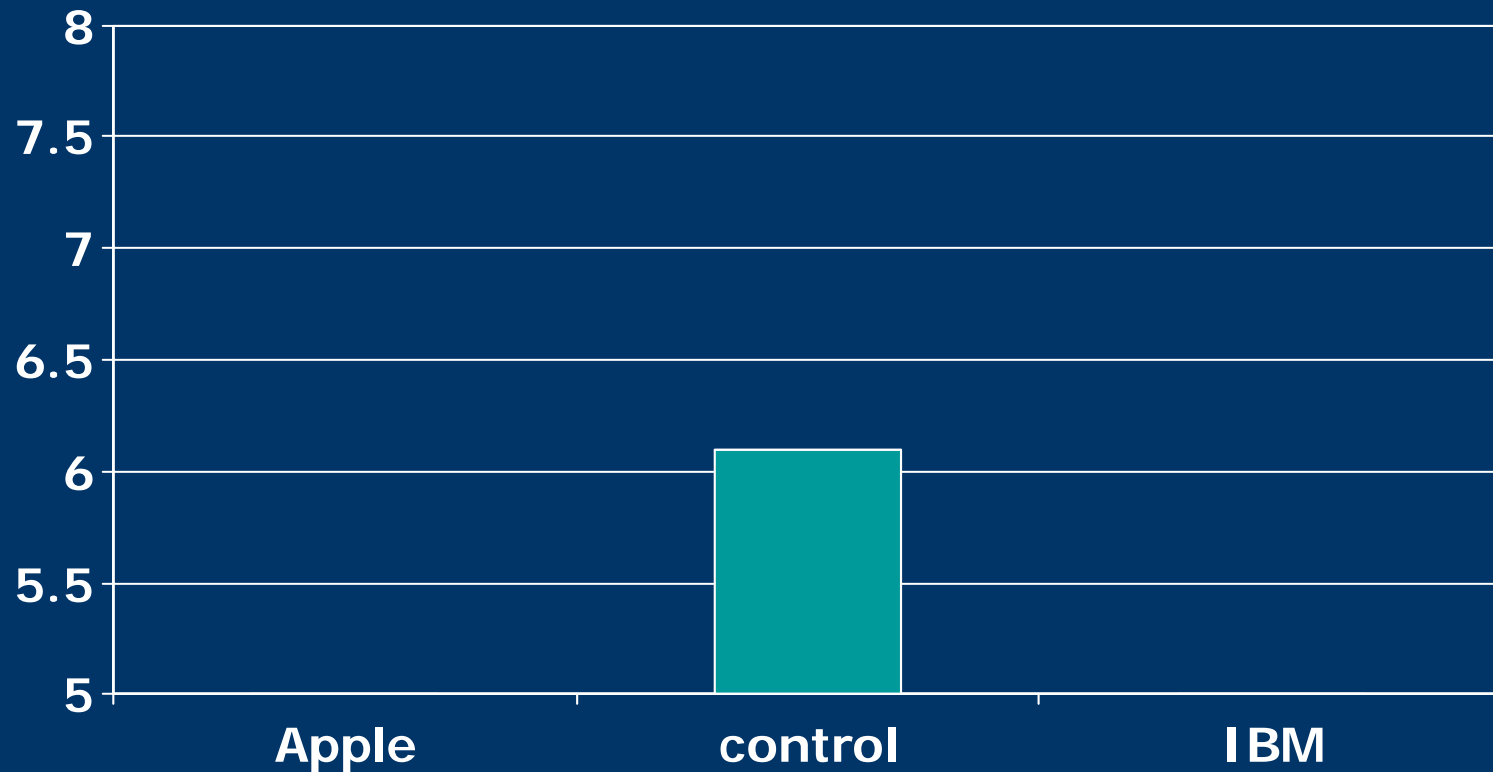
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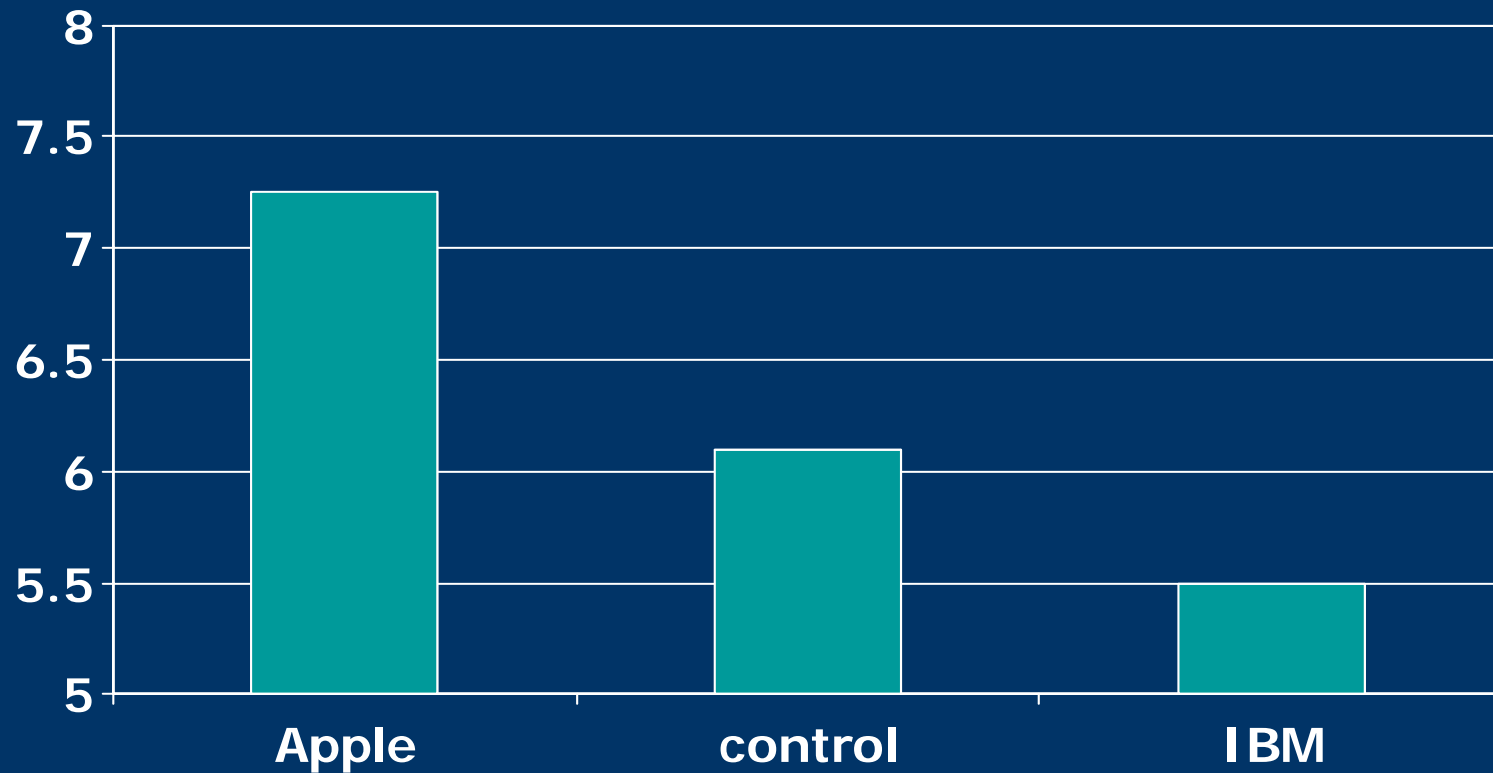
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# Number of Uses



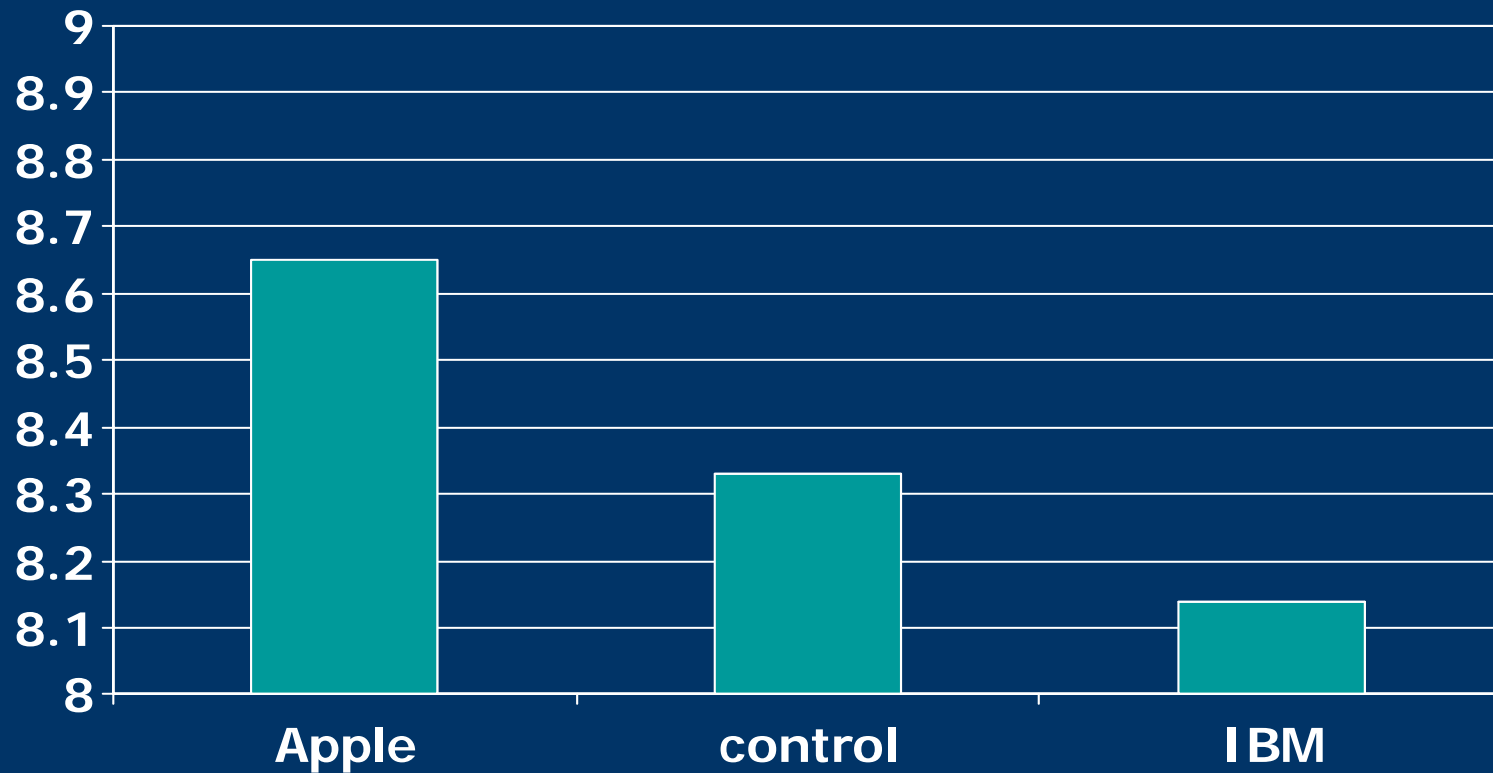
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# Number of Uses



*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, in prep)*

# Creativity

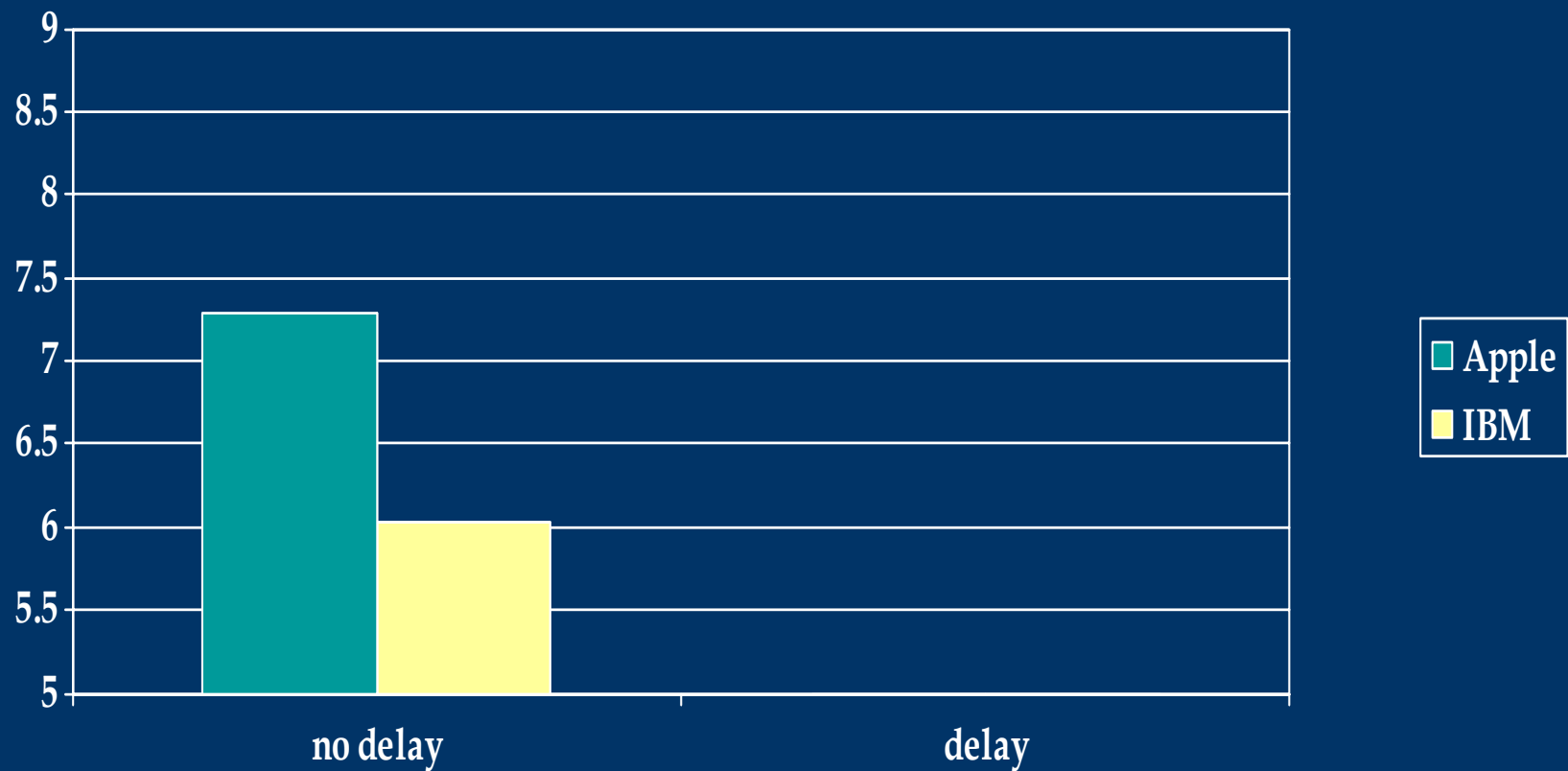


*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, in prep)*

# Motivational component?

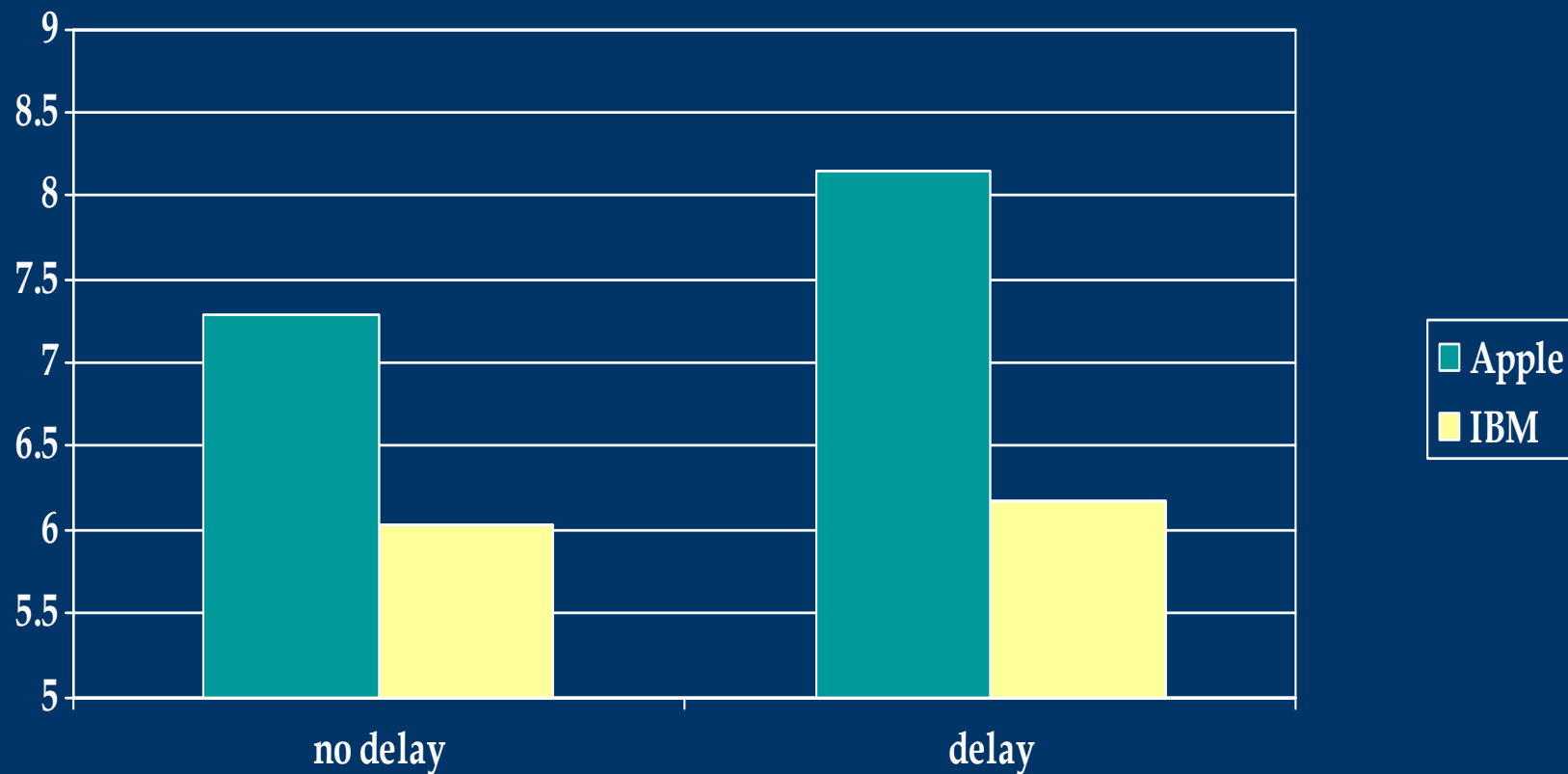
- Perceptual priming effects are known to diminish in strength after a short delay. In contrast, motivational priming effects continue - and even increase - after a delay (Bargh et al., 2001).
- Students attending two separate lectures were subliminally primed with either Apple or IBM logos
- Half of participants completed the Unusual Uses Task immediately; half did so after a 5-min delay.

# Number of uses for bricks



*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, under revision)*

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*(Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, under revision)*

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# Automatic pursuit of consumer behavior goals

- Consumers pursue conscious goals regarding purchasing behavior (Howard & Sheth, 1969)
- These goals might be automatically activated by certain environments

# Automatic pursuit of consumer behavior goals

- Primed participants through SST with one of two consumer goals
  - To save money and get the best value (*value goal*)
  - To get the most prestigious, admired product (*brand-image goal*)

# Sample items from “Brand-Image” Scrambled Sentence Task

1. he prestige what want did

2. is expensive item gorgeous that

3. others does impress only she

4. he conscious her image is

5. extravagant total here is everything

# Sample items from “Prestige” Scrambled Sentence Task

1. he *prestige* what want did

2. is *expensive* item gorgeous that

3. *others* does *impress* only she

4. he *conscious* her *image* is

5. *extravagant* total here is everything

# Sample items from “Value” Scrambled Sentence Task

1. begin you tightfisted will when

2. grass green prudent is the

3. money does save only she

4. he conscious her price is

5. everywhere pinchers here are penny

# Sample items from “Value” Scrambled Sentence Task

1. begin you *tightfisted* will when
2. grass green *prudent* is the
3. *money* does *save* only she
4. he *conscious* her *price* is
5. everywhere *pinchers* here are *penny*

# Automatic pursuit of consumer behavior goals

- Gave Ps 3 scenarios where they had to choose between 2 products: one high in value/ low in brand-image, and one high in brand-image/ low in value
- Ps given scenarios either immediately (*no delay condition*) after priming task or after 9 minute delay (*delay condition*)
- DV: percentage of Ps in each condition who chose each option

## Scenario 1: Crew Socks

- You notice that it is time to throw away your cotton crew socks and buy new ones. You are considering the following two options:



### (A) Nike

- Combed cotton
- \$5.25/pair

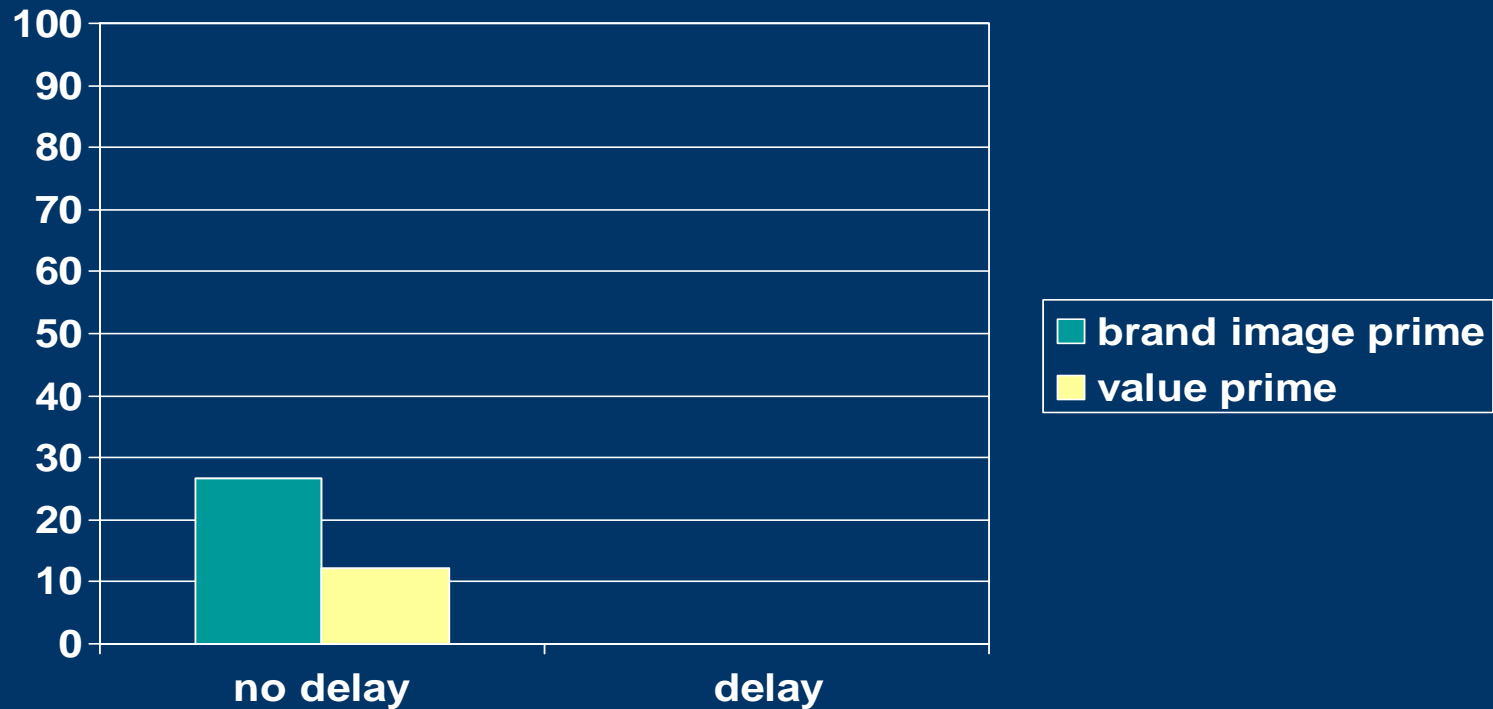


### (B) Hanes

- Combed cotton
- \$6 for 2 pairs

# Crew Socks:

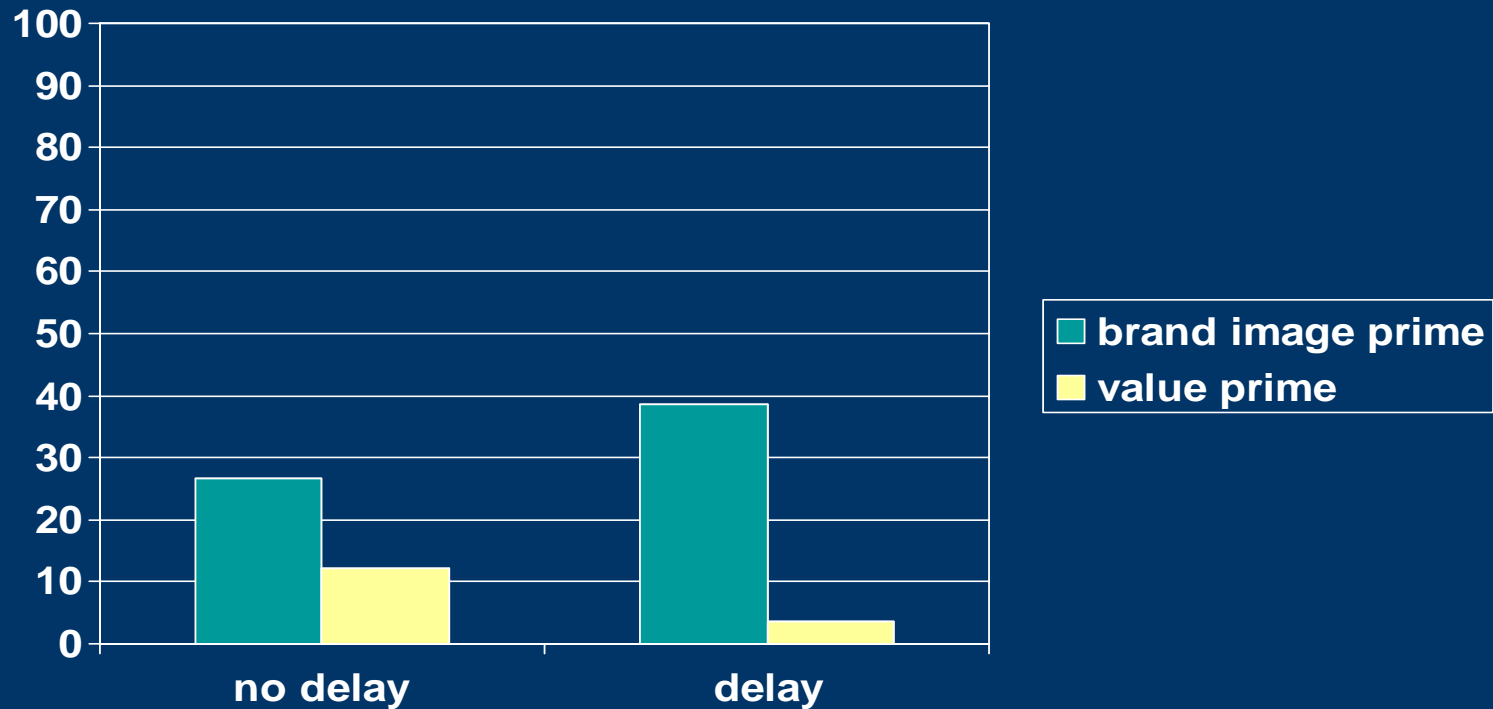
*Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option*



*(Chartrand, Shiv, & Huber, in prep.)*

# Crew Socks:

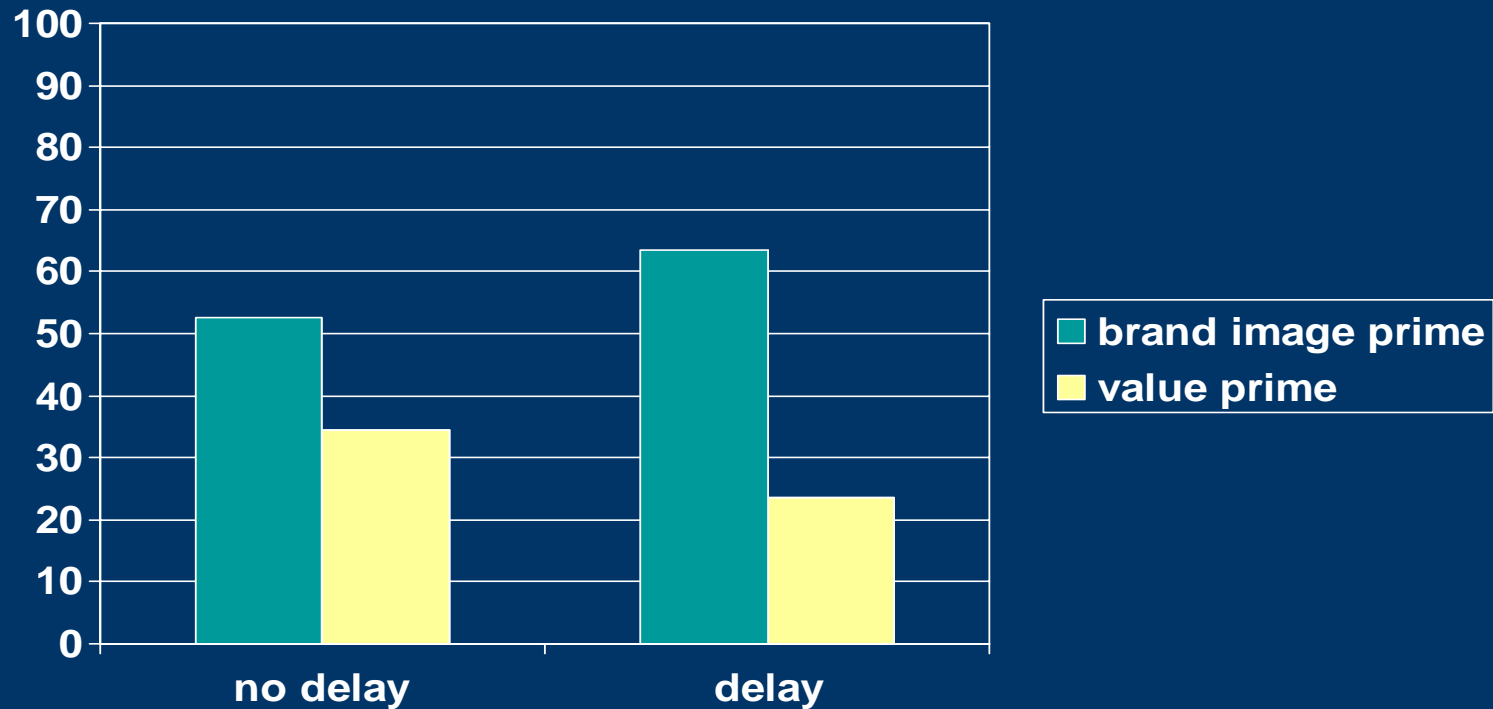
*Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option*



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# Average of All Scenarios

## *Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option*



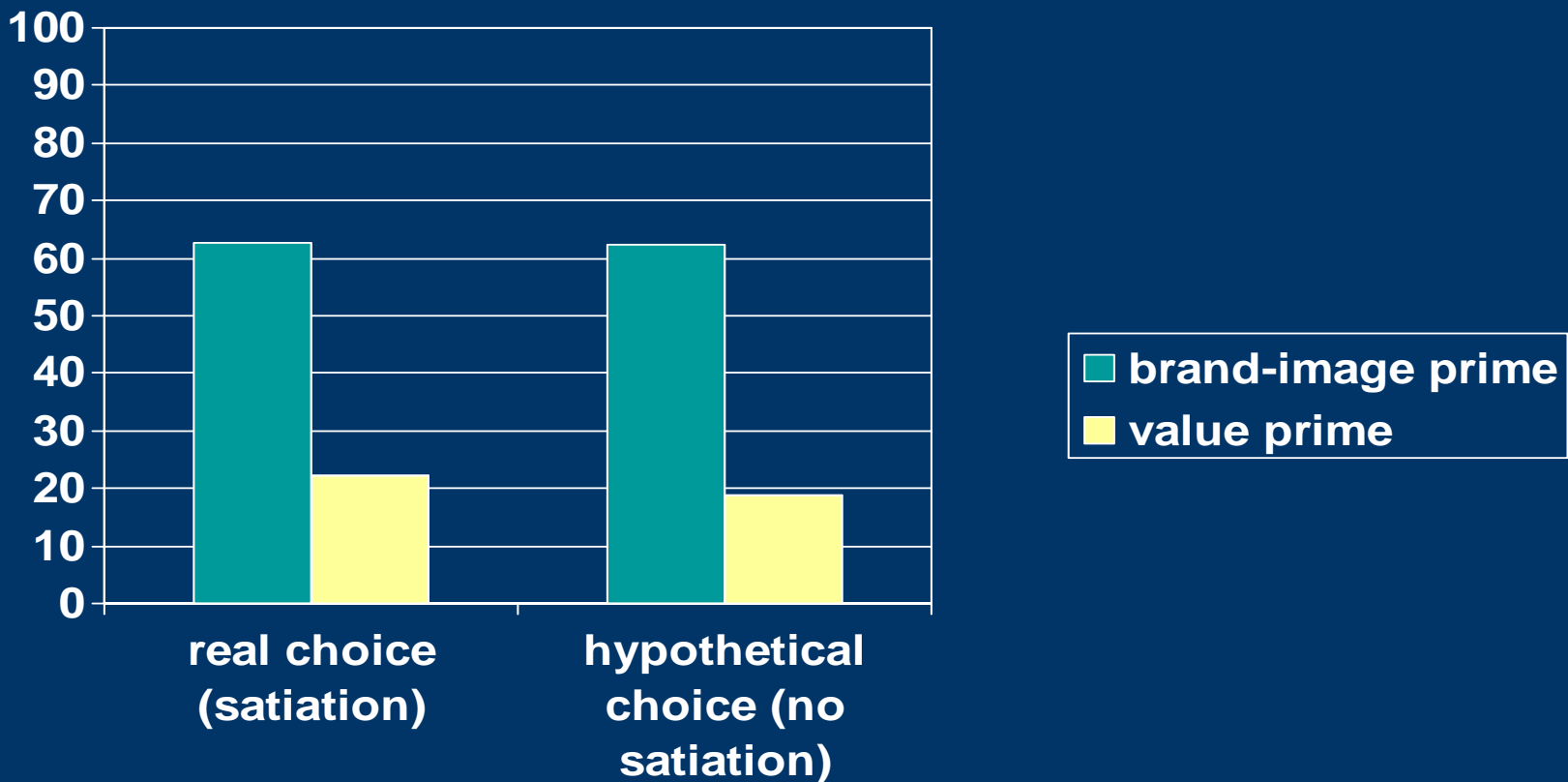
*(Chartrand, Shiv, & Huber, in prep.)*

# Does making hypothetical choices satiate goal states?

- Hypothetical versus real choices: does making hypothetical choices reduce goal activation?
- Ps primed with brand-image or value goal
- Ps given *hypothetical or real* choice concerning \$6 socks that were high and low in brand-image
- Ps given second, *real* choice of watch they would get if they win lottery (high or low brand-image)
- Hypothesis: if Ps make real choice, primed goal should be satiated, and should therefore not affect the second choice. If Ps make hypothetical choice, primed goal should still be active and affect second choice

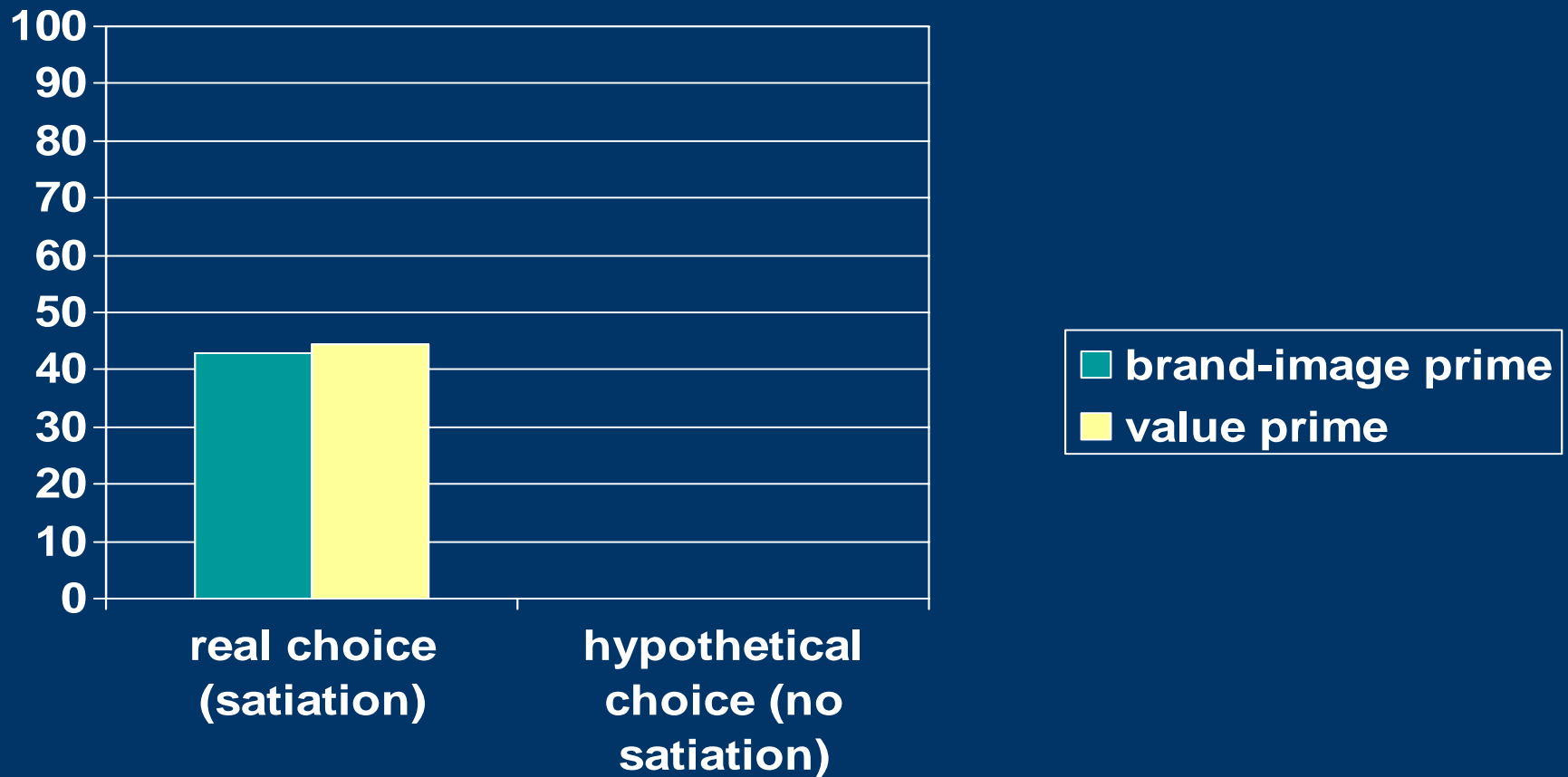
# Effects of goal prime and goal satiation on first choice (hypothetical or real)

*Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option*



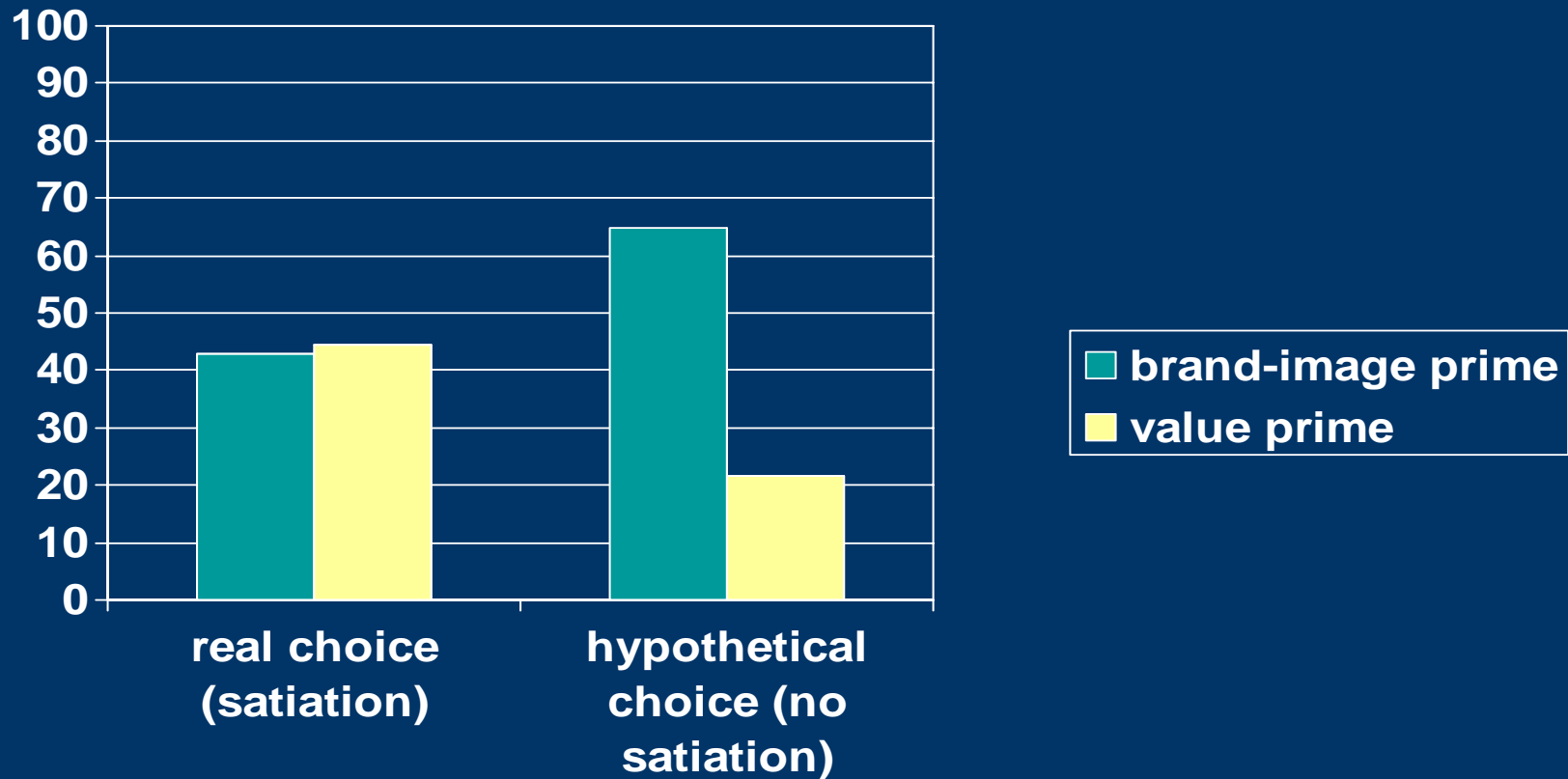
Control group (no first choice): 40.0%

# Effects of goal prime and goal satiation on final choice: *Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option*



*(Chartrand, Shiv, & Huber, in prep.)*

# Effects of goal prime and goal satiation on final choice: Percentage of Ps who chose expensive option



Control group (no first choice): 42.9%

# Conclusion

Consider all three approaches to integrating social and consumer psychology:

1. Replicate research in social psychology using consumer-relevant stimuli
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Thank you