Affect and Its Effects on Compensatory Consumption

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AFFECT AND ITS EFFECTS ON COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION
The Effect of Moods on Comfort Food Consumption
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Marketers have been accused of unfairly promoting the consumption of comfort foods, that are often assumed to be low in nutrients and high in sugar, fat, and regret. Clinical research of these foods has focused on bad moods and bad foods, neglecting investigation of favorable moods and nutritious foods. We use a mood maintenance framework to explore whether different types of comfort foods fulfill different purposes depending on mood. A framework is developed to show that comfort food segments are influenced by taste driven factors and developmentally driven factors. After describing a national survey that shows that comfort foods are comprised of both nutritive and less-nutritive foods, two lab experiments are described which show that consumers in negative moods had stronger preferences and consumption intentions for unhealthy foods that were advertised than for healthy foods. The opposite was found for those in positive moods.

Emotion Effects on Compensatory Consumption
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When individuals experience sadness, one of the ways they try to repair their negative state is by consuming tasty, fatty food products that are hedonically rewarding to the individual (Garg, Wansink and Inman 2005). Sad individuals also, tend to pay more to obtain a new object (e.g., water bottle) than do individuals in a neutral state (Lerner et al. 2004). However, this process is not completely conscious for most individuals. Thus, this study examines the influence of sadness, and neutral emotions on choice price for an object when participants have the opportunity of repairing their negative mood state by consuming food product or engaging in other forms of compensatory consumption, before indicating their choice price.

Feeling Ashamed or Guilty? The Emotions and Consequences of Violating Consumption Norms
Vanessa M. Patrick (University of Georgia), Deborah J. Mcinnis (University of Southern California) and Shashi Matta (University of Southern California)

In two studies, the authors examine the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt arising from the violation of consumption norms. In study 1, they examine the differential impact of shame and guilt on consumers’ behavioral motivations and demonstrate the moderating role of entity orientation i.e. consumers’ implicit theories about the fixedness or malleability of the self. In study 2, using an advertising context with “avoidance” vs. “change” ad appeals, the authors demonstrate the role of shame and guilt and entity orientation on ad liking and behavioral intent. The authors discuss the theoretical contribution of this research and implications for self-regulation and advertising.

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LONG ABSTRACTS

“The Effect of Moods on Comfort Food Consumption”
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What are comfort foods? The popular press depicts comfort foods as various forms of junk food, with very little nutritive value. However, this may not always be the case. Taste related studies show that most taste preferences are developed throughout the life cycle. Developmental studies also show conditioned responses to comfort foods through early exposure, prenatal exposure, and genetic differences that may result in unconventional preferences for comfort foods. Using a national survey and two lab experiments, a framework is developed for examining the phenomenon of comfort foods. The graphic description of influential factors on comfort foods depicts physiological and psychological links to taste and preference development, the antecedents of comfort foods. Examination of how these tastes and preferences translate into comfort food choices due to mood states has not yet been extensively explored. The need for the consumption of food can be attributed to physiological functions and psychological reasons. Physiological factors of food needs consist of the body’s natural response to derive pleasure from certain foods. Psychological factors, consisting of social contexts, conditioned responses, and mood specific responses, affect the consumption of food. The stimulation to eat results from a combination of the brain’s arousal of hunger to satiate the body’s energy and nutritive imbalance and of sensory stimulation (Le Magnen 1986) to satiate cravings.

A national survey of 1005 participants were used in determining mood effects on the consumption tendency towards comfort foods. The findings indicate that comfort foods are made up of both nutritive and less-nutritive foods. The scenario-based recall study suggested that positive mood states encourage the consumption of healthful comfort foods while negative mood states encourage less-nutritive comfort food consumption. In two follow-up studies in the lab, positive or negative moods were induced through scenario development, and participants were presented with advertisements for products that were relatively healthy or relatively unhealthy. This included cookies (vs. rice cakes), candy bars (vs. apples), and so forth. Measures of attitude and consumption intentions were consistent with the basic notion that those in negative moods were more likely to generate favorable attitudes and consumption intentions for the unhealthy foods than the healthier ones. This study makes three contributions to the discussion of mood and food. First, contrary to common wisdom, it shows that people use both nutritive as well as less nutritive foods to provide themselves comfort. Second, contrary to clinical research, it shows that people may be more prone to consume comfort foods both when in bad moods and in good moods. Third, consistent with hedonic contingency theory, it shows that preferences for foods vary with ones mood. Those in positive moods prefer more nutritive foods, and those in negative moods prefer less nutritive foods.

Although it was beyond the scope of this research to specifically examine the underlying mechanism by which people come to prefer certain comfort foods more than others in different moods, the results of two experiments offer an explanation as to why such differences occur. While this research provides some interesting and important theoretical and practical implications, there are numerous issues yet to be explored in understanding the taxonomy of comfort foods and the preference structures related to them. These studies add three important findings to the growing literature that investigates the importance and impact of how eating habits develop. These findings can hopefully serve as a springboard for future investigations of how physiological and psychological factors influence comfort food preferences and how these preferences then impact subsequent dieting and food consumption habits.

“Emotion Effects on Compensatory Consumption”
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For some time now, researchers have been paying closer attention to the influence of affect on consumption and have hinted at a possible relationship between the two. For example, Woodruffe (1997) examines ‘compensatory consumption’ in women’s shopping behavior. Her findings suggest that shopping offers a means of compensation (reward) for some women when they are in a negative affective state. Her study makes two important points. First, she suggests that compensatory consumption is a regular activity and is not restricted to clinically ill or under-privileged groups of consumers. Second, she suggests that this might be a way for people to ‘repair’ negative emotional states.

More recently, research has shown that when individuals experience sadness, one of the ways they try to repair their affective state is by consuming tasty, fatty food products that are hedonically rewarding to the individual (Garg, Wansink and Inman 2005). Research has also established that sad individuals tend to pay more to obtain a new object (e.g., water bottle) than do individuals in a neutral state (Lerner et al. 2004). Also, they choose to take the object over money to a greater extent than do neutral individuals (choice price). However, this process is not completely conscious for most individuals. Thus, the objective of this study is to take an in-depth look at compensatory consumption and examine how people use it to cope with their affective state. Specifically, this research examines the influence of two discrete emotions, sadness, and neutral, on two outcome measures—amount of food consumed and choice price for an object—and whether the influence of sadness on choice price is moderated when participants have the opportunity of consuming food product earlier on (Study 1) and whether the influence of sadness is consumption domain specific such as across eating food vs. acquiring a new object (Study 2).

Study 1 examines the role of sadness and neutral emotions on two variables in the consumption domain. One, is the amount of food consumed (e.g., Garg et al. 2005) and the second, is the choice price for an object (e.g., Lerner et al. 2004). Garg et al. (2005) found that sad (vs. happy) individuals consume more butter popcorn (a hedonic product) and they suggest that this is done in order to repair their mood. Study 1 predicts that when participants are given an opportunity to consume a hedonic product before they provide their choice price for a product (say, water bottle), this will influence their choice price. A 2 (popcorn: present, absent) x 2 (emotion: sad, neutral) between-subjects design was implemented to test the hypotheses of the study. Interestingly, the results indicate that whereas neutral individual’s choice price goes down after consum-
ing a hedonic product, sad individual’s choice price actually goes up. This suggests that whereas neutral individuals are insensitive to activity differences in compensatory consumption (eating vs. buying a product), sad individuals’ need to compensate for that feeling of loss (Lazarus 1991) becomes more salient in the other domain (acquiring a new product) after they have an opportunity to satisfy it in the first domain (eating in this case).

Study 2 thus, examines the mechanism driving the influence of sadness on compensatory consumption. Specifically, it tries to ascertain whether the results obtained in study 1 are due to sadness being domain specific or whether it is due to sad individuals just having a higher threshold for compensatory consumption. To test this hypothesis, a 3 (sad with emotion repair task, sad with emotion amplification task, neutral) cell design was implemented. Everyone was also offered popcorn and diet soda/water to consume. The prediction is that if the results are being driven by sad individuals’ higher threshold for compensation, then subjects in the ‘sad with emotion repair’ condition should show a drop in their choice prices as they are offered two opportunities to compensate—food consumption and emotion repair task—before their choice price is elicited. However, if sadness is domain specific then we should see similar choice prices across the two sadness conditions and these choice prices should be higher than those in the neutral condition, replicating the results from Study 1.

Overall, these studies will provide valuable insights about consumption behavior and the influence of affect on the same. Given the rising concern with obesity and other consumption related problems (e.g., compulsive shopping), the implications of this research should be of interest to academics, policy regulators, managers as well as consumers. Further, this research would shed some light on the underlying mechanism by comparing and contrasting different theoretical frameworks to suggest the one that can better explain the results.

“Feeling Ashamed or Guilty? The Emotions and Consequences of Violating Consumption Norms”

Vanessa M. Patrick, University of Georgia
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Shame and guilt are negative self-conscious emotions that have remained relatively unexplored in consumer research. Understanding shame and guilt has practical significance as their evocation may motivate, de-motivate, or serve as responses to consumption. For instance, shame and guilt may be evoked in response to consumption practices viewed as normatively inappropriate (e.g., compulsive shopping, consumption of pornography, over-eating) as well as from the failure to consume products and services viewed as normatively appropriate (e.g., exercise, low calorie foods, gift giving, failure to tip or buy a product from a dotting salesperson). In sum, these emotions arise as a result of the violation of a consumption norm. Further, from a motivational standpoint, some products and services (e.g., therapy, exercise, cosmetic surgery, and gifts) are consumed so as to reduce shame or guilt. Others are avoided (e.g., visits to doctors) because they induce shame or guilt. The study of shame and guilt also has theoretical significance. While prior research has largely focused on contrasting affective states of different valence (Arkes, Herren, and Isen 1988; Wright and Bower 1992), studying the potential differential effects of emotions of the same valence is particularly relevant for emotions such as shame and guilt, which are often referred to inconsistently or used interchangeably.

The objectives of this research are three-fold. The authors first introduce and conceptually distinguish the two self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt in the consumption domain. Second, they examine the differential impact of shame and guilt on consumers’ behavioral motivations and demonstrate the moderating role of an individual difference variable—consumers’ implicit theories about the fixedness / malleability of personality (study 1). Finally, they demonstrate that the priming of shame and guilt impacts consumers’ encoding and retrieval of new information regarding the violation of a consumption norm, their expectations of the behavioral response to this violation, and the perceived likelihood of repeating the violation of the consumption norm in the future (study 2).

Defining Shame and Guilt. Shame and guilt are often confused and used interchangeably (Tangney and Dearing 2002), perhaps because they are both self-conscious and moral emotions of self-condemnation. Though similar, some research in psychology suggests that shame and guilt are distinct. Shame involves a focus on and evaluation of one’s self, whereas guilt concerns a focus on and evaluation of one’s behavior (Lindsay-Hartz 1984; Tangney 1992; Tangney et al. 1996). Notably, while shame and guilt differ in perceived causal locus, they may be precipitated by the same causes. For instance, the same behavior (eating chocolate mousse/getting a birthday gift) may evoke shame in one consumer (I am selfish/a glutton) and guilt in another (I shouldn’t have broken my diet/let my busy schedule get the better of me). What matters is not the initiating cause but rather consumers’ interpretation (i.e., appraisal) of it. Based on their differing appraisals, the authors define shame and guilt as follows: Shame is an emotion evoked from a perceived transgression of the self in evaluating a consumption episode involving oneself. Guilt is an emotion evoked from a perceived transgression of behavior in evaluating a consumption episode involving oneself.

Study 1. The study (N=199) used a 2x2x2 design manipulating the evoked emotion (shame vs. guilt), the context in which the incident occurred (consumption vs. non-consumption), and measuring consumers’ implicit theories about the malleability of personality (fixed vs. malleable). Measures included ratings of the intensity of various emotions and different motivations arising from the emotion-evoking incident. Results showed that (1) shame and guilt are recent and frequent emotions in consumption contexts; (2) shame inspires the motivation to distance oneself from the shame-inducing situation whereas (3) guilt inspires the motivation to repair the situation that gave rise to the feelings of guilt; and (4) consumers’ implicit theories about the fixedness / malleability of personality moderate the effect of experienced shame or guilt on consumers’ behavioral motivations.

Study 2. Respondents (N=60) provided a detailed written account of a personal shame (or guilt) experience, listed a set of counterfactuals about how the situation might have been different. They then read a narrative in which an undergraduate senior describes two episodes in which an individual engaged in a violation of a consumption norm. Following a two-minute distracter task, participants were asked to write down as much of the narrative as they could recall. Other measures included respondents’ expectations of behavioral responses of the characters in the narratives, and the perceived likelihood of these characters repeating similar consumption behaviors in the future. Results showed that (1) priming shame made consumers process and recall new information about a violation of a consumption norm with an emphasis on traits or personality whereas (2) priming guilt shifted the emphasis to behaviors; and (3) consumers primed with shame report a greater expectation of the likelihood of repeating the consumption behavior than those primed with guilt. The authors discuss the theoretical contributions of this research, and the practical implications to consumer behavior, self-regulation, and advertising.