The Influence of Shopping Goals on Consumers’ Sequential Choices

Naoki Akamatsu, Meiji Gakuin University, Japan
Reo Fukuda, Asia University, Japan

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ABSTRACT
The present study focused on shopping goals and analyzed sequential choice. The results demonstrated that if the shopping goals were the same for the choices made at the first point and the second point, the first choice affected the second choice more than if the goals were different. Additionally, the way this influence happens corresponds to the relationship of each choice.

INTRODUCTION
Sequential choice is the act of making one choice and then making another choice afterwards (Dholakia et al. 2005), and as consumers, we regularly do this at supermarkets and restaurants, so it is becoming an important research topic in consumer studies.

In research on sequential choices by consumers, studies that assume multiple conflicting goals have started to be actively conducted, starting with the study done by Dhar and Simonson (1999). A subsequent study that is particularly noteworthy is Fishbach and Dhar (2005). This study confirms that the results of subsequent choices differ depending on the amount of goal progress. Specifically, the study demonstrated the balance in sequential choices, whereby when it is perceived that sufficient progress has been made on a goal, consumers will subsequently make a choice that is intended to make progress on a different goal. It also demonstrated that when consumers do not think that sufficient progress has been made on a goal, they will make a subsequent choice that corresponds to that goal. Based on these findings, many studies have been conducted on sequential choices that assume conflict between several goals (e.g., Chandon and Wansink 2007; Finkelstein and Fishbach 2013; Laran and Janiszewski 2009; Lee et al. 2016; Naggal et al. 2015; Novemsky and Dhar 2005). However, despite the fact that sequential choices are actively made in stores, there have been few studies that analyzed sequential choices assuming consumer behaviour inside stores like supermarkets that consumers use regularly (Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2009).

While inside stores, consumers do their shopping with multiple shopping goals. In this case, choosing each product can be looked as a means of achieving their shopping goals (Bagozzi and Dholakia 1999), and by referencing the content of the corresponding shopping goal, it is possible to understand the placement of the choices. In research on sequential choices, it is important to understand the placement of choices in relation to each other because this research analyzes how choices affect other choices. Nevertheless, the existing studies have mainly analyzed sequential choices by looking at conflicting goals like goals related to self-control, such as health goals or weight goals, and pleasure-seeking goals that conflict with them, and not enough discussions have focused on shopping goals. Therefore, the present study analyzes the effects of sequential choices by focusing on shopping goals corresponding to choices.

HYPOTHESES
If the shopping goals are the same for the first choice and the second choice, the first choice would probably have a larger impact than the second choice if the shopping goals are different for the two choices. The reason for this is because if the goals of each choice were the same, there would be a closer relationship between the two choices. Below, the effects between choices will be considered assuming that shopping goals for each choice are the same.

The effects between the choices will be considered by citing the following two types of relationships between each of the choices: (1) a balancing relationship and (2) a reinforcing relationship. These types of relationships both share the fact that they are attempting to promote shopping goals (Fishbach et al. 2006), but their methods are different. This is to say that in order to make progress on the shopping goals, the former (1) is a relationship that considers balancing the benefits (Fishbach and Dhar 2005; Huber et al. 2008), while the latter (2) is a relationship that considers reinforcing the benefits (Dhar and Simonson 1999; Zhang and Haung 2010).

By considering these sorts of relationships between choices, it is possible to set a hypothesis about the influence on sequential choices. If the shopping goal corresponding to each choice is the same (e.g. “shopping for dinner”) and each of the choices are in a balancing relationship (e.g. “main dish” and “side dish”), the second choice will probably be a choice that focuses on a different benefit (attribute) than the first choice because of the result of the first choice. This is to say that the second choice will be a choice intended to balance the benefits. People think that by supplementing multiple benefits with each choice, the shopping goals will be promoted through an interim goal.

On the contrary, if each of the choices are in a reinforcing relationship (e.g. “main dish” and “alcohol”), the second choice will

Figure 1: Hypothetical Framework

- Shopping goal for the second choice (same or different from the first choice)
- The relationship of each choice (Study1: balance / Study2: reinforcement)
- Result of first choice (pleasure or health)
- Dependent variable: Intention of second choice (pleasure or health)
probably be a choice that focuses on the same benefit (attribute) as the first choice because of the results of the first choice. This is to say that the choices are intended to reinforce the benefits. The reason for this is that synergistically obtaining benefits through these sequential choices is thought to further promote shopping goals.

Based on the above-mentioned points, it seems that if the shopping goals are the same for the first choice and the second choice, the second choice will correspond to the relationship between each of the choices. Therefore, the below hypotheses can be made.

Hypothesis 1 When the shopping goals are the same for the first choice and second choice and there is a balancing relationship between each of the choices, the choice made second will intend to balance benefits more so than when the shopping goals are different.

Hypothesis 2 When the shopping goals are the same for the first choice and second choice and there is a reinforcing relationship between each of the choices, the second choice will intend to reinforce benefits more so than when the shopping goals are different.

**METHODS**

The analyses were conducted by dividing the situations into two cases, where each of the choices were in a balancing relationship (Study 1: “main dishes” and “side dishes”) and cases where each of the choices were in a reinforcing relationship (Study 2: “main dishes” and “alcohol”).

The experimental conditions were 2 (results of the first choice: pleasure/health) x 2 (shopping goal for the second choice: same/different from the first choice), and all conditions were manipulated among the participants. Under these conditions, the participants gave responses about the intention of their second decision.

**Study 1: Procedure**

First, participants were presented with the following scenario: “Please imagine that on one of your days off, you are eating dinner at home by yourself. You are walking to a nearby supermarket to pick up what you will eat for dinner.” Next, two scenarios were presented separately with regards to the results of the first choice “choosing a fried breaded pork cutlet (pleasure-oriented)” “choosing fried breaded tofu (health-oriented).” After this, the scenario of choosing a salad was presented as the second choice, and at this time, the participants further classified into “the group that is choosing it as something to eat after a bath (different shopping goal as the first)” and “the group that is choosing it as something to drink after a bath (different shopping goal as the first).”

The options for the second choice that were presented were a premium alcohol (pleasure-oriented) and low-sugar, low-calorie alcohol (health-oriented), and the responses were given using a 7-point scale from “I definitely want to drink the low-sugar, low-calorie alcohol” (1) to “I definitely want to drink the premium alcohol” (7).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Study 1: Results**

The results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) found a main effect for the results of the first choice (F(1,171) = 2.88, p < .1), but no main effect was found for whether or not the shopping goals were the same for the first and second choices (F(1,171) = .20, p = .65). Then, because interactions were identified (F(1,171) = 5.70, p < .05), an analysis of a simple main effect was also performed.

When the results of the first choice were pleasure-oriented, respondents reported the intention to make health-oriented second choices more in instance when the shopping goals were the same for the first and second choices than in instances when they were different (M_same = 3.48, M_different = 4.36, t = -2.02, p < .05). When the results of the first choice were health-oriented, there was no difference observed for whether the shopping goals were the same or different (M_same = 4.74, M_different = 4.14, t = 1.36, p > .1). When the shopping goals were the same for the first and second choices, there was a trend for the second choice to be pleasure-oriented more in cases when the result of the first choice was health-oriented than when it was pleasure-oriented (M_pleasure = 3.48, M_health = 4.74, t = -3.03, p < .01). When the shopping goals were different for the first and second choices, there was no difference in the intention in the second choice due to the results of the first choice (M_pleasure = 4.36, M_health = 4.14, t = .47, p > .1).

In addition to this, a sampling of only health-conscious people was conducted, and an additional analysis was performed. The results of the ANOVA demonstrated interactions (F(1,116) = 7.72, p < .01). The results of a simple main effect demonstrated that in cases where the results of the first decision were health-oriented, respondents made choices that were inclined to be more frequently pleasure-oriented in cases when they had the same shopping goals for the two choices than in cases when they had different shopping goals (M_same = 5.04, M_different = 4.11, t = 1.68, p < .1). Other than this, the results were the same as those of the overall sample.

**Study 1: Discussion**

In cases where results of the first decisions were pleasure-oriented, respondents chose health-oriented options more frequently in cases when they had the same shopping goals for the two choices than in cases when they had different shopping goals. Thus, the tendency for making choices that were intended to balance health and pleasure could be reported.

Furthermore, even in the case when the sample was health-conscious, when the result of the first choice was health-oriented, respondents demonstrated the tendency to make decisions inclined toward balance more frequently when the shopping goals were the same. It seems that health-conscious people thought they had accomplished their health goal that they are normally conscious of in their first choice, so they were able to make their second choice in a way that was balanced.

Finally, in cases when the shopping goals were the same for both the first and second choices, respondents’ second choices were
inclined to be for health-oriented options more frequently in cases when the first choice was pleasure-oriented than in cases when it was health-oriented. This also shows that when the first choice is health-oriented, the second choice is more pleasure-oriented.

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the trend of making a second choice inclined toward balance was verified in cases where the shopping goals were the same for the first choice and second choice. Thus, these findings supported H1.

However, it is possible that the content of the first choice regulates the effects on sequential choices, and this point will be an issue in future research, including its relationship with the consumer characteristic of health awareness.

### Study 2: Results

The results of the ANOVA demonstrated interactions ($F(1,273) = 3.78, p < .1$), so an analysis of a simple main effect was also performed.

In cases where the results of the first choice were health-oriented, the second choice tended to be inclined toward health-oriented options more frequently in cases when the shopping goals were the same for the two choices than in cases when they were different ($M_{same} = 3.65, M_{different} = 4.13, t = -1.66, p < .1$). On the other hand, when the results of the first choice were pleasure-oriented, no difference was observed in the second choice depending on whether the shopping goals were the same or different ($M_{same} = 4.25, M_{different} = 4.13, t = 0.05, p = .98$).

Moreover, when the shopping goals were the same for the first and second choices, the second choice tended to be a pleasure-oriented choice more frequently when the first choice was pleasure-oriented than when the first choice was health-oriented ($M_{pleasure} = 4.37, M_{health} = 3.66, t = -4.24, p < .01$).

An additional analysis was performed that targeted health-conscious people. The results of the ANOVA demonstrated interactions ($F(1,186) = 6.50, p < .05$). The results of a simple main effect demonstrated that in cases where the results of the first decision were pleasure-oriented, respondents made choices that were inclined to be pleasure-oriented more frequently in cases when they had the same shopping goals for the two choices than in cases when their shopping
goals were different (Msame = 4.37, Mdifferent = 3.66, t = 1.77, p < .1). Other than this, the results were the same as the overall sample.

**Study 2: Discussion**

When shopping goals are the same for the first and second points in time, the second choice is inclined toward reinforcement, and this supports H2. Additionally, when respondents were health-conscious, even in cases where the result of the first choice was pleasure-oriented, there was the tendency for choices to be inclined toward reinforcement more frequently if the shopping goals were the same. Nevertheless, this trend is the result of an increased intention to make choices for health-oriented options for the second choice in an attempt to accomplish the health goal that was not accomplished for dinner using choices corresponding with other shopping goals. Referencing the content of the first choice is a topic for future investigation just as it was in Study 1.

**CONCLUSION**

The current research demonstrated trends consistent with H1 and H2, and it is apparent that this is even more obvious when only health-conscious people are targeted. Thus, when analyzing consumers’ sequential choices in stores, it is important to think about the shopping goal that corresponds to each choice.

**REFERENCES**


