Special Session Summary  Investigating Links Between Consumption Emotions and Behavior

Adam Duhachek, Northwestern University

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SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY
Investigating Links between Consumption Emotions and Behavior
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SESSION OVERVIEW
This session presented research examining the relationship between emotional states and behavior. Consonant with recent consumer research suggesting that emotions impact behavior and attitude, this session explored the nexus between consumer affect and behavior across an array of behavioral phenomena. The three papers in the session investigated links between emotions and conscious behavioral processes, as well as more subtle relationships existing between emotions and non-conscious processes. This session contributed to extant understanding of emotion’s influence on consumers by focusing on emotions as both an antecedent and consequence of, consumer phenomena (papers 2 & 3).

The first paper by Duhachek and Iacobucci considered how consumer emotions and stress appraisals influence choice of coping strategies across two studies. The first study considered how consumer emotions resulting from a service encounter interact with stress appraisals to affect consumer’s choice of particular coping strategies. Drawing from cognitive theories of emotions, hypotheses are formulated identifying unique influences of two negative consumption emotions (anger and threat) on coping. A second study replicates these relationships in the context of sports fans coping with a defeat in a highly publicized college football game. This study provides additional support for the hypotheses as well as a dynamic view of coping, where specific emotional reactions influence coping strategy selection over time.

In the second paper, Ramanathan and Williams examined mixed emotional responses to impulsive consumption, specifically focusing on the interaction between immediate (hedonic) and delayed (self-conscious) emotions (Giner-Sorolla 2001) and their influence on future behavior. In the first experiment, both impulsive and prudent consumers are induced into impulsive behavior via a priming manipulation. Emotional responses are measured immediately after engagement in the impulsive act, as well as one day later. Results show that hedonic emotions prevail in the short-run among all consumers. However, these are mixed with self-conscious emotions among prudent consumers. After one day, however, those short-term hedonic emotions decay for both groups, leaving only prudent consumers with a negative trace. This in turn, reduces intentions for prudent consumers to re-engage in the same impulsive behavior, relative to impulsive consumers. A second experiment finds that giving prudent consumers the opportunity to engage in a utilitarian (versus impulsive) behavior, after an initial act of impulsive consumption, reduces their experience of self-conscious emotions immediately after the impulsive act. Finally, a third experiment examines the degree to which mixed emotional responses to impulsive acts impact future actions in the same versus different behavioral domains.

In the third paper, Chartrand examined the consequences of non-consciously pursued goal states. Once a nonconscious goal is activated and pursued, individuals either succeed or fail at this goal, and this can have downstream consequences. Studies presented suggested that succeeding at nonconscious goals leads to positive “mystery moods”, whereas failing leads to negative “mystery moods”. The consequences of these mystery moods for self-enhancement, aggression, and performance were discussed, along with the implications of this research for consumer choice and emotion.

SHORT ABSTRACTS

“An Examination of the Relationship between Emotions, Appraisals and Coping,”
Adam Duhachek, Northwestern University
Dawn Iacobucci, Northwestern University

The growing consumer literature on consumption emotions and coping has documented a diverse array of strategies consumers employ to cope with emotion-arousing consumption episodes. This research examines the premise that the experience of certain emotions implicates the choice of certain coping strategies. We demonstrate that specific negative consumption emotions systematically predict consumers’ choice of particular coping strategies. Data from two studies are presented to show that consumers’ choice of coping strategies differ as a function of their predominant emotional reaction. The research also finds that consumers’ perceived level of coping efficacy moderates the influence of emotions on coping. These findings are discussed in the context of recent research demonstrating emotional influences on consumer behavior.

“Oops, Will I Do It Again? Mixed Emotions After Impulsive Behaviors,”
Suresh Ramanathan, University of Chicago
Patti Williams, University of Pennsylvania

Impulsive behaviors are often accompanied by mixed emotions where pleasure mingles with guilt. We investigate how these emotions evolve differentially across time among impulsive and prudent people and how such differences manifest in the likelihood of engaging in similar behaviors. We show that prudent people are most likely to experience intense ambivalence immediately after an impulsive act. Presenting such people with an opportunity to “launder” their emotional ambivalence by engaging in a subsequent utilitarian behavior reduces feelings of conflict.

“Mystery Moods: The Consequences of Success and Failure at Nonconscious Goal Pursuit”
Tanya Chartrand, Ohio State University

Although individuals are often cognizant of deliberately choosing goals and engaging in goal-driven behavior, goals can also be automatically activated by features of the immediate environment and nonconsciously pursued (e.g., Chartrand & Bargh, 1996). This includes consumer-related goals, which can be primed to guide consumer behavior outside of one’s conscious awareness and intent (Shiv, Huber, & Chartrand, in progress). Once a nonconscious goal is activated and pursued, individuals either succeed or fail at this goal, and this can have downstream consequences. Studies presented will suggest that succeeding at nonconscious goals leads to positive “mystery moods”, whereas failing leads to negative “mystery moods”. The consequences of these mystery moods for self-enhancement, aggression, and performance will be discussed, as will the implications of this research for consumer choice and emotion.