Non-Consequential Reasoning in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Decisions
Laura Smarandescu, Non-consequential Reasoning in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Decisions

Non-consequential Reasoning in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Decisions

Abstract
This work investigates the effects of pursuing non-instrumental information on non-consequential reasoning in the context of hedonic vs. utilitarian purchase context. No difference has been found between individuals’ willingness to pursue non-instrumental information in the two purchase contexts, but individuals were more likely to rely on non-instrumental information for a hedonic rather than for a utilitarian purchase decision. This research suggests that individuals feel more accountable for hedonic purchases and thus, are more likely to weight non-instrumental information in their purchase decision in order to avoid feelings of guilt. Rationality and the “sure thing principle” Under uncertainty, individuals tend to make decisions in a consequential manner by assessing the perceived likelihood of each alternative outcome, and its potential implications for the individuals’ desires and actions (Shafir and Tversky 1992). Although choices based on a consequential evaluation of anticipated outcomes are expected to satisfy Savage’s “sure thing principle”, which states that if we prefer A to B given any possible state of the world then we should prefer A to B even when the exact state of the world is unknown, people do not always make choices in a consequential manner and the “sure thing principle” is sometimes violated. Bastardi and Shafir (1998) showed that people who expressed an intention to take an action unconditioned by whether an event occurred or not, chose to postpone their action when the outcome was unknown. They attributed this effect to the ill-defined preferences held by individuals when arriving at choice. Hence, individuals who are unsure about their preferences are motivated to look for additional information to simplify their choice task, and pursue non-instrumental information because it seems relevant to their decision. However, once they pursue the non-instrumental information, they treat it as instrumental and weight it into their decision. This work extends the research of Bastardi and Shafir (1998) testing the effects of pursuing non-instrumental information on non-consequential reasoning in the context of hedonic vs. utilitarian product purchases. Choosing between Utilitarian and Hedonic Consumption
When consumers make trade-offs between necessities and indulgences, the latter are at an inherent disadvantage because necessities are at a higher status in the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1970; Weber 1998). The lower status of hedonic with respect to utilitarian consumption has been long documented by philosophers, sociologists and political scientists (Berry 1994, Weber 1998). Berry proposes that individuals adhere to a principle of precedence inspired by Protestantism, which indicates that needs have to be met before desires. Shafir, Simonson and Tversky (1993) suggest that when the choice between a hedonic vs. utilitarian consumption is based on reason, hedonic consumption is at a disadvantage relative to utilitarian consumption, since the latter provides a better justification, as being essential for the individuals’ well being. A consequence of Weber’s normative view of consumption is that individuals associate paying for hedonic products with greater anticipated guilt, which has the potential of spoiling the consumption experience (Prelec and Lowenstein, 1998; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002). Kivetz and Simonson (2002) indicate that the consumption of hedonic experiences such as vacations and gourmet restaurant dinners may evoke guilt even when they are offered at no cost, individuals feeling that they take away from work or that they deviate from a healthy diet. Nonconsequential Reasoning in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Decisions

Consistent with Shafir, Simonson and Tversky (1993), this work predicted that individuals have less available justifications for a hedonic than for a utilitarian product purchase, and that they would be more inclined to pursue non-instrumental information in order to better motivate a hedonic purchase. It was further proposed that in the event that individuals choose to pursue non-instrumental information, they are likely account for this information and weight it into their purchase decisions. This study revealed
no differences in individuals’ willingness to pursue non-instrumental information in the two purchase contexts. However, individuals were more likely to rely on non-instrumental information when they contemplated a hedonic purchase rather than when a utilitarian purchase was considered.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12298/volumes/v33/NA-33

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
Non-consequential Reasoning in Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Decisions
Laura Smarandescu, University of South Carolina

This work investigates the effects of pursuing non-instrumental information on non-consequential reasoning in the context of hedonic and utilitarian product purchases. Individuals did not differ in their willingness to pursue non-instrumental information in the two purchase contexts; however, once they pursued the non-instrumental information they were more likely to rely on it in hedonic than in utilitarian purchase decisions. This research suggests that individuals feel more accountable for hedonic than for utilitarian purchases and thus, they are more likely to weight non-instrumental information to avoid feelings of guilt.

Is It the Luxury Car or the Super Model that Tempts Him?: The Possibility of Misattributed Arousal
Xiuping Li, University of Toronto

Research in consumer impulsivity has documented the effect of hedonic stimuli (e.g., dessert) on related behaviors (eating). We extend this line of research in the direction of whether the induced craving towards one hedonic stimulus category (dessert) can be carried over (or misattributed) to intertemporal choices in ostensibly unrelated behavioral domains (investing). In a series of experiments, we found that cues of hedonic stimuli (pictures or scents) led to (1) more choices of vices, (2) impatience in waiting for larger monetary gains, and (3) unplanned purchases.

Goal Abstraction Compatibility and Lexical Fit in Consumer Choice
Ryan Hamilton, Northwestern University

Objects can be described by either their concrete, feature-level attributes or by more abstract, benefit-level attributes. Likewise, a consumer may have a relatively more abstract or concrete mindset in approaching a decision. In a series of studies, we find that choice is a function of consumer mindset such that individuals with an abstract mindset tend to prefer products that dominate on abstract benefits and individuals with a concrete mindset tend to prefer products that dominate on concrete features.

Differential Impact of What is Available and What is Inferred: Promotional Element Salience Effect in Reference Price Promotions
Igor Makienko, Louisiana State University

Conceptual Background
In reference price promotions, consumers are usually exposed to a sale price and a reference price or to a reference price and a discount (we do not investigate situations with all three elements). Thus, savings are presented either directly, in the form of an explicit discount,