Don’t Go to the Grocery Store Hungry?

Christine Ringler, Arizona State University, USA
Andrea Morales, Arizona State University, USA
Steve Nowlis, Arizona State University, USA

Wisdom suggests when you go to the grocery store hungry you buy more, however, we find that consumption effects are driven by the interaction between hunger and cognitive load such that only when consumers are hungry and under load that they lose their self-control and eat more hedonic food items.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15793/volumes/v38/NA-38

[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/.
A series of blocked multiple regression analyses were also conducted to examine the impact of physical appearance concern on proposed dependent variables. In all of these analyses, gender was entered in the first step and physical appearance concern was entered in the second step. The inclusion of physical appearance in the second step resulted in significant F changes in all analyses.

The results showed that as physical appearance concern increases, people spend more money on clothes and apparel ($\beta = 0.193$, $t = 12.773$, $p < 0.001$) and luxury items ($\beta = 0.208$, $t = 14.679$, $p < 0.001$). Also, they go shopping for clothes and apparel more frequently ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 16.145$, $p < 0.001$). These results provided support for H2.

Our results also showed that people who are highly concerned with their physical appearance are more likely to consume healthy foods ($\beta = 0.196$, $t = 13.934$, $p < 0.001$) and more likely to consume foods that help them manage their weight ($\beta = 0.192$, $t = 13.571$, $p < 0.001$). However, no significant relationship between physical appearance concern and frequency of exercising was found ($\beta = -0.009$, $t = -0.443$, $p = 0.658$). Therefore, H3 was partially supported.

Overall, our study shows that, as the cultivation theory suggested (Gerbner et al. 1977), media consumption affects the level of physical appearance concern. People who consume certain types of TV programs and magazines are more likely to be concerned with their physical appearances. Similar to previous studies, our study shows that physical appearance concern has negative impacts on clothes/apparel-related consumption behaviors. As opposed to previous studies, on the other hand, our study provides some evidence that physical appearance concern might lead to healthy behaviors, such as healthy food consumption. Future studies should examine these issues through experiments and longitudinal studies in order to establish direct cause-effect relationships between media, physical appearance concern, consumption behaviors, and health-related behaviors.

**References**


**Don’t Go to the Grocery Store Hungry?**

Christine Ringler, Arizona State University, USA
Andrea Morales, Arizona State University, USA
Steve Nowlis, Arizona State University, USA

The focus of the current research, is to identify whether consumers show preference for hedonic and utilitarian food and non-food items when hungry, explain why such differences exist, and demonstrate the relationship between hunger and self-control (manipulated through cognitive load) on our consumption of hedonic and utilitarian items. Research on palatability and preference ratings (Rolls et al. 1981), the role of external cues (Cornier et al. 2004), and variety seeking behavior (Menon and Kahn 1995) have explored how hunger affects our preferences and choices. This literature shows that consumers are not very good at understanding their body, instead they respond to external cues like time of day or the smell of pizza (Schachter 1968). Additionally, they tend to seek items that will satiate their hunger (Goukens et al. 2007), which results in increased attractiveness of the items when hungry. Only after they have eaten a large amount of one item does the attractiveness of that item decrease (Rolls et al. 1981). However, research does not offer predictions regarding cases of consumption where the most attractive item is not the most consumed. We hypothesize that while self-control does not affect the attractiveness of an item, self-control is in effect when the individual is ready for consumption, thus extending previous work on the effects of hunger in consumption settings and self-control in general. We extend this research by gaining a better understanding of the effects of self-control as a moderator between hunger and consumption. Specifically, we consider the case where consumers report their individual levels of hunger, then participate in consumption of utilitarian and hedonic foods. This leads us to propose a theory of hunger that demonstrates that when hungry, consumers have a tendency to eat more than they should, therefore, they tend to employ self-control tactics, which stop them from eating excessive quantities of the hedonic foods, but allows them to eat the utilitarian foods. Research on self-regulation has investigated cases where consumer impose measures of self-control (restrained eaters), but has not examined cases where consumers are “normal” eaters and impose measures of self-control when presented with hedonic food items in a hunger situation.
Although prior research on hunger has identified reasons why consumers ignore internal signals of hunger (i.e., impulsiveness) and in particular when external cues are present; we extend the research to explain why hungry consumers eat more of the utilitarian product even though the hedonic is more attractive. Research on hedonic versus utilitarian consumption has shown that consumers rate a hedonic alternative higher than a utilitarian alternative when each is presented by itself, but the utilitarian alternative tends to be chosen over the hedonic alternative when the two are presented together (Okada 2005). To the degree that presenting the utilitarian and hedonic products separately but within the same survey constitutes them being looked at singularly, we would expect the preference for hedonic products to be higher than utilitarian products, this effect being magnified when consumers are hungry and the hedonic products are food. The goal of study 1 is to examine whether hedonic items, (food and non-food), are shown more preference when hungry then when not hungry. We are interested in testing whether self-control moderates the relationship between hunger and preference for hedonic food items, specifically we will examine utilitarian food and non-food item preference when hungry and not hungry. As such, in study 1 we assess whether consumers find hedonic items more attractive than utilitarian items by asking them to rate them individually under situations of low and high cognitive load and under feelings of hungry and not hungry. The results of study 1 indicate that consumers view hedonic food items as being more attractive than hedonic non-food items and utilitarian items when hungry compared to not hungry. Participants rated food items as being preferred only when they were hedonic in nature. Additionally, participants did not consider non-food items more attractive when hungry. This demonstrates that hunger impacts consumer choices when evaluating food products, however this is only applicable to hedonic food products and does not appear to extend beyond this category. Previous research indicates that high cognitive load causes us to make choices based on impulse (choosing hedonic items), which might not occur if consumer’s choices were free of cognitive load. These findings suggest that cognitive load moderates the relationship between hunger and product preferences in that only under high load and hunger do consumers prefer hedonic food items. Lastly, we identified no differentiation in product preference when participants were under low load. Study 2 attempts to test our second hypothesis by measuring actual consumption, as it relates to hunger using hedonic and utilitarian food items, under conditions of high and low cognitive load. We test consumption by using hedonic and utilitarian food items (M&M’s versus Carrots) under conditions of hungry and not hungry. While attempting to replicate the results of study 1 under low load, study 2 shows that when we present the food item to the participant, hunger has no impact on the preference for hedonic food item (M&M’s), which is consistent with the results of study 1. Additionally, results indicate that participants are able to employ self-control tactics when hungry that allowed them to avoid eating more of the hedonic food item but allowed them to eat more of the utilitarian food item. To better understand this, study 3 seeks to replicate the results of study 2 and turn off the over consumption of hedonic food items when hungry and under high load by providing participants with calorie or no calorie information. Study 3 finds that under high load with no calorie information present, participants ate significantly more when hungry than when not hungry. Under high load with calorie information present, the difference between hungry and not hungry failed to reach significance. Additionally, when no calorie information is present and participants were not hungry, the difference between low load and high load failed to reach significance. Study 4 seeks to understand the underlying processes associated with these results.

References

Environmental Cues and Food Consumption
Beth Vallen, Loyola University, USA
Lauren G. Block, Baruch College, USA
Chrissy Mitakakis, Baruch College, USA

Extended Abstract
Individuals often face self-control dilemmas, whereby temptations interfere with the pursuit of long term goals (Fishbach and Shah 2006). Choosing between vices, which provide immediate pleasure, and virtues, which are in line with long-term goals, is likely to generate guilt and intrapersonal conflict. Along these lines, individuals often seek justification for indulging in vices to reduce feelings of guilt (Giner-Sorolla 2001). Recent research provides support for the contention that specific occasions or special events (i.e., holidays, birthdays, etc.) engender a sense of entitlement for individuals in terms of their consumption behavior; this justification cue results in a greater likelihood of relaxing self-control and selecting vices (e.g., chocolate cake) over virtues (e.g., fruit salad; Kivetz and Zheng 2006). On the contrary, such cues can also result in a heightened defensive state for people who are particularly guarding against indulgence, such as dieters.

In this research, we explore how individual differences in dieting behavior interact with the presence of an environmental cue, such as a special occasion or holiday, to either justify indulgence or bolster self-control, leading to a choice of more versus less indulgent