The “Smile-Seeking” Giver: How Immediate Affective Reactions Motivate and Reward Gift-Giving

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Gift-givers don’t always give what receivers want. This mismatch has often been attributed to givers’ mispredicting receivers’ preferences. We present six studies to show that independent of prediction errors, this mismatch can be attributed to giver’s “smile-seeking” motive, i.e., wanting to induce the most desirable display of affective reactions.

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The Power of Negative Visualizations: When Fear Appeals Motivate Consumer Behavior

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Fear appeals are a common marketing tactic that intend to persuade consumers to buy products and services that aim to help avoid an undesirable outcome. It is proposed that the main mechanism involved is the arousal of fear or anxiety, a potent source of energy that propels people into action (Hull 1943). It is assumed that scare tactics should modify behavior when the undesirable outcome is perceived as severe, probable, yet surmountable (Rogers 1975). However, empirical evidence reveals that fear appeals are not always efficient despite meeting these criteria (e.g. Morales et al. 2012; Passyn and Sujan 2006). Various variables were examined to explain the inconsistencies in past findings (e.g. Manyiwa and Brennan 2012; Smith and Stutts 2003), focusing primarily on moderators relating to types of fear appeal, emotions and individual differences.

The present paper employs the technique of visualization to further understand instances when fear appeals are, and are not, efficient at motivating behavior. Work on negative visualizations is limited and generally affirms that mental imagery of feared self-states encourage consumers to engage in behaviors that will distance them from the undesirable outcome (Hoyle and Sherrill 2006). However, we propose that negative visualizations are not all equally efficient, and that processing style (abstract versus concrete) is a key determinant of the fear appeal’s persuasiveness. More specifically, abstract imagery of the feared self should increase motivation to avoid the undesirable outcome, while concrete visualizations do not produce such motivational tendencies. These propositions are based on past research which affirms that abstract processing reduces perceived boundaries between an individual's various self-concepts, while concrete processing heightens self-concept distinctions (Forster et al. 2008; Wakslak et al. 2008). This theorizing suggests that mentally simulating one's feared self-state in abstract terms should evoke perceptions of assimilation to the imagined feared self, which is likely to evoke sufficient anxiety required to drive motivated behavior. Conversely, visualizations processed in a concrete fashion heighten perceptions of self-discrepancy, thereby reassuring individuals that the feared self is distant from their present state and hence, that no action is required. In sum, we propose that fear appeals have the potential to motivate consumer behavior, but only when they instigate abstract (not concrete) visualizations. Further, we also show that this effect is driven by feelings of anxiety.

Study 1

To verify whether abstract visualizations enhance motivation, we examine whether they increase people’s tendency to engage in goal shielding – i.e. a tendency to inhibit other goals from diverting attention from a focal goal (Shah et al. 2002). 128 participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (visualization task: feared self, control) x 2 (processing style: abstract, concrete) between-subject design. 12 participants (6%) were dropped for failing to complete the manipulation task. In the feared self condition, participants either visualized having achieved their feared body appearance in a general sense (i.e. abstract processing), or first specified important attributes associated with their feared body image (e.g. gain 20 pounds, cellulite) and then visualized having achieved these concrete attributes (i.e. concrete processing). In the control condition, participants visualized their daily routine in a general sense (i.e. abstract) or specifically visualized their morning routine (i.e. concrete). In a seemingly unrelated study participants were asked to write down their new year’s resolutions. Answers were coded for how many unrelated goals were reported (dependent variable). If the avoidance goal (i.e. feared body appearance) was still activated, participants should engage in goal shielding and list less goals unrelated to health and fitness. An ANOVA and simple contrasts verified that abstract fear visualizations motivated goal shielding tendencies more so than the other types of visualizations (Mviz_abstract=.85, Mviz_concrete=1.57, Mcontrol_abstract=1.79, Mcontrol_concrete=1.33).

Study 2

The main objective of study 2 was to confirm that abstract visualizations of the feared self motivate goal-congruent choices. 194 undergraduate students participated in a 2 (visualization task: feared self, control) x 2 (processing style: abstract, concrete) between-subject design. 12 participants (6%) were dropped for failing to complete the imagery task. Participants first completed the same visualization task as in study 1. After a short filler task, subjects were presented with a list of 20 consumer goods, and rated how likely they were to purchase each item (7-point scale). Included in the list were 6 health-related items (e.g. running shoes, smoothie maker). The mean score served as the dependent variable. An ANOVA and simple contrasts verified that abstract visualizations of the feared self motivated higher intent to purchase healthy goods, compared to the other visualizations (Mviz_abstract=5.12, Mviz_concrete=4.55, Mcontrol_abstract=4.65, Mcontrol_concrete=4.61).

Study 3

The objective of Study 3 was to provide evidence for the proposed affect-based mechanism, namely that abstract imagery evokes feelings of anxiety, and that these feelings prompt motivated behavior. 215 participants were randomly assigned to the abstract fear and routine visualization conditions (the concrete conditions were removed). They then reported their feelings, and completed the same consumer survey as in the previous study, measuring their level of interest in health-related products. A mediational analysis using model 4 of Hayes’s PROCESS macro indicated a partial mediation (5000 samples, 95% CI,.04,.13) (figure 1). The indirect effect of abstract fear visualizations on healthy behaviors through anxiety was positive, however, anxiety only partially mediates this relationship since the direct effect of abstract fear visualizations on healthy behaviors, after the path through anxiety was accounted for, was still significant.

General Discussion

The present findings show when and how visualizations of the feared self motivate people to make goal-relevant consumer choices and engage in goal-congruent behaviors, as well as provide preliminary evidence for the mediating role of affect in this relationship. The present paper contributes to the literature in at least three ways. First, we are the first to employ the visualization technique when examining the effects of fear appeals in consumer research. Second, we are the first to examine the role of processing style as a moderator in the mental imagery literature. Third, we provide empirical evidence.
that negative mental imagery motivates consumer behavior via emotional arousal (not only cognitive processes).

REFERENCES


How Does Power Distance Belief Affect Consumers’ Preference for User- versus Designer-Designed Products?

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

User design, whereby firms draw on their user communities to generate ideas for new products (Dahl, Fuchs, and Schreier 2015), has become increasingly popular among marketers. However, there are substantial differences in the effectiveness of this design approach across countries, suggesting that cultural orientation is important in understanding the effect of user design on consumer preferences. Until now, the extant research has not yet investigated the role of cultural orientation. We propose that power distance belief (PDB), defined as “the extent to which a society accepts and views as inevitable or functional human inequality in power, wealth, or prestige” (Oyserman 2006, 353), moderates the relationship between design philosophy and consumer preference. More specifically, we predict that consumers with high (low) PDB will prefer designer- (user-) designed products to user- (designer-) designed products (H1). Additionally, the impact of low PDB on preferring user-designed products to designer-designed products is mediated by a stronger identification with the user-driven company (H2a), while the impact of high PDB on preferring designer-designed products to user-designed products is mediated by a stronger trust in the designer-driven company (H2b).

Study 1 used Apache’s country-level market share to measure consumers’ preference between user- and designer-designed products. We used Hofstede’s country scores of power distance (PD) as independent variable, while individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation per capita GDP, educational index, and the Internet users index of each country as control variables. The results of regression on 75 matching countries indicated that only PD had a significant negative effect on Apache’s market share (b = -.099, z = -2.21, p = .02), such that Apache’s market share was smaller in countries with higher PD than in those with lower PD. Further, we found that the relationship between PD and user-designed product preference is robust by controlling for alternative explanations such as other cultural dimensions and economic variables. Taken together, the results supported hypothesis 1 at country level.

Study 2 was a 2 (PDB: low US vs. high China) × 2 (Design philosophy: designer design vs. user design) between-subjects design. The results revealed a significant interaction between country and design philosophy (F(1, 463) = 24.67, p < .001). American participants (low PDB) demonstrated a stronger preference (MsubA = .43) for user-designed products than for designer-designed products (Mdesigner A = -.18; F(1, 463) = 10.31, p = .001), consistent with Dahl et al. (2015). The Chinese participants (high PDB) indicated a reverse pattern (Muser A = -.36, Mdesigner A = .39; F(1, 463) = 14.46, p < .001). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported at individual level.

Study 3 was designed to investigate the underlying mechanism proposed in hypotheses 2a and 2b. It was a 2 (PDB: low vs. high) × 2 (Design philosophy: designer design vs. user design) between-subjects design. We used the sentence-scrambling task developed by Zhang et al. (2010) to prime PDB, and we manipulated design philosophy following Schreier et al. (2012). The results revealed that the interaction effect between design philosophy and PDB (F(1, 172) = 8.45, p = .004) was significant. A planned contrast indicated a similar pattern to Study 2. More importantly, a bootstrap analysis revealed the significant moderated mediation effects of identification (95% CI: [-1.19, -.02]) and trust (95% CI: [-.50, -.03]) at different levels of PDB. For low-PDB condition, identification (95% CI: [.03, .92]) mediated the positive effect of user design on purchase intention, whereas trust (95% CI: [.27, .05]) did not. For high-PDB condition, the negative relationship between user design and purchase intention was mediated by trust (95% CI: [-.55, -.12]) but not by identification (95% CI: [-.48, -.27]). Thus, hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b were supported.

Study 4 was a 4 (Design philosophy: novice designer design vs. designer design vs. user design vs. male user design) between-subjects design. The description in “designer design” and “user design” conditions was identical to Study 3. To manipulate the female participants’ identification with the user-driven company, we additionally described the members of the user-community as predominantly male in the “male user design” condition. We manipulated participants’ trust in the designer-driven company by undermining the expertise of the internal designers in the “novice designer design” condition. We measured purchase intention, identification, trust and chronic PDB. The results revealed a significant interaction effect between design philosophy and chronic PDB (r(368) = -.32, p = .001). More importantly, when identification was manipulated to be low, there was no significant difference in purchase intention between the low-PDB participants in the “male user design” and the “designer design” conditions (Mmale user = 4.13 vs. Mdesigner = 4.18; t(368) = .16, p > .80), suggesting that identification was underlying low-PDB’s effect on preference between designer and user designed products. However, when trust was manipulated to be low, no significant difference was found between the high-PDB participants’ purchase intention in the “novice designer design” and “user design” conditions (Mnovice designer = 4.47 vs. Muser = 4.49; t(368) = .07, p > .90), suggesting that trust was mediating high-PDB’ effect on dependent variable. Thus, this study provided stronger evidence regarding the underlying psychological processes using a moderation-by-process design.

This paper contributes to the relevant literature in several significant ways: advancing user-design research by uncovering a very important theoretical boundary condition, i.e., PDB; documenting a new psychological process for user-design evaluation by showing that trust is also essential to explain consumer’s preference for user- versus designer-designed products among high-PDB consumers; advancing the PDB literature by demonstrating that PDB effect can be mediated by different psychological process, depending on the decision contexts.

REFERENCES


Unethical Product Returning as a Function of Consumers’ Experienced Psychological Distance

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Unethical product returning refers to a form of consumer misbehavior that is characterized by abuse of a firm’s returns policy by a consumer. Harris (2008) defined unethical product returning to be knowingly returning “a functional but used or post-purchase damaged product to any store without informing the store of the use or the true cause of damage” (p. 464). Unethical product returning by consumers is a source of great expense for retailers in terms of re-shipping, quality checks after the return, repackaging or even destroying the products. Therefore, research and practice warrant explanations for the prevalence of this misbehavior (Rosenbaum, Kuntze, and Wooldridge 2011).

Literature previously focused on issues such as which products typically are returned (Piron and Young 2000), motivations to defraud (Schmidt et al. 1999), demographic or psychographic factors that influence unethical product returning (King and Dennis 2003; Harris 2008), neutralization techniques of customers who defraud (Rosenbaum, Kuntze, and Wooldridge 2011), determinants of the success of the fraud (Harris 2010), the perspective of service employees on unethical product returning (O’Brien, Hill, and Autry 2009), and contextual factors that influence unethical product returning (e.g., firms’ return policies, Chu, Gerstner, and Hess 1998).

This article extends previous research on contextual influences on unethical product returning in terms of the following issues: First, we introduce and systematically test the impact of psychological distance experienced by consumers towards a company on the probability of executing unethical product returning. While recent research has shown the importance of psychological distance for the extent of trust associated with a retailer (Darke et al. 2016), we consider psychological distance in the area of consumer misbehavior. Psychological distance is connected to construal-level theory (Trope, Liberman, and Waksblak 2007). The basic assumption is that more distal entities are constructed on a higher level and are therefore represented more abstractly than proximal entities. Abstraction, then, can influence how consumers process and evaluate information (Dhar and Kim 2007). We focus on social distance as one facet of psychological distance because of its special importance for unethical product returning, as research has found consumers to hesitate to execute unethical product returning when they anticipate embarrassment in front of service personnel (e.g., Harris 2010).

Second, we systematically consider two contextual variables that may influence psychological distance; in particular, we analyze how the retail channel (offline vs. online) alone or in interaction with firm size (small vs. large firms) affects psychological distance and therefore the probability of unethical product returning (Study 1). We derive two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The probability of unethical product returning is higher when the product is purchased online than when it is purchased at a brick-and-mortar (offline) store. This relationship is mediated by the social distance experienced by consumers.

Hypothesis 2: Firms size moderates the effect proposed in H1. More specifically, the effect of an online (vs. offline) channel on unethical product returning via social distance is stronger for small firms while it is weaker or even absent for large firms.

As a third contribution, we consider ways to decrease unethical product returning. Previous studies have focused on financial methods to reduce unethical product returning, such as fees for (re)ship-ment (Chu, Gerstner, and Hess 1998; Hjort and Lantz 2012). The present paper supplements the consideration of financial costs by taking “psychological cost” (Chu, Gerstner, and Hess 1998, p. 143) into account. By suggesting that a smaller psychological distance affects the psychological cost of unethical product returning, we analyze possibilities for firms to reduce UPR via reducing psychological distance (Study 2). We analyze the impact of “giving the online retailer a face” – a personalization strategy that applies a personal purchase advisor on the website. We derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: An online retailer can decrease the probability of unethical product returning by applying (vs. not applying) a personalization strategy on the website. The effect of personalization is sequentially mediated by reduced social distance and increased anticipated return risk.

Hypothesis 4: The effect proposed in H3 is stronger for small firms and weaker or even absent for large firms.

We conducted two experimental studies. Study 1 employed a 2 (retail channel: offline vs. online store) × 2 (firm size: small vs. large) between-subjects design. Study 2 focused on the online channel and used a 2 (personalization strategy: absent vs. present) × 2 (firm size: small vs. large) between-subjects design. We applied a scenario approach in the context of a jewelry retailer (Study 1) and a clothing retailer (Study 2). We used third-person scenarios, which are recommended to decrease socially desirable answering. Participants indicated the probability of returning the product and experienced psychological distance from the third-person perspective (Fisher 1993). Since only participants who had recognized the firm’s return policy, a higher probability can be interpreted as abuse of these rules. We used mediation analyses and moderated mediation analyses to calculate effects. The results confirmed retail channel to influence consumers’ experienced social distance and consequently probability of unethical product return (H1). This effect was moderated by firm size (H2). We found that personalization strategy on a website reduced social distance. The results confirm a chain of effects of personalization on the probability of unethical product returning via social distance and anticipated return risk (H3). H4, suggesting a moderation of the website personalization effect by firm size, was rejected.

Several further research avenues are worth considering. First, we focused on unfamiliar retailers. Since research has discussed the relevance of familiarity for social distance (Edwards et al. 2009), further studies should ask whether the effects found here hold for...
familiar retailers. In Study 2, participants were exposed to a purchase advisor they did not know. Therefore, research could consider the effects of avatars that are used in integrated communication (e.g., when consumers already know the avatars from advertising or other sources). Second, as the results for H3 have shown, anticipated return risk served as a mediator. However, processes that are more closely related to relational aspects should be considered (as the impact of reduced social distance on trust; Darke et al. 2016).

REFERENCES
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A common marketing strategy, especially recently, is to offer product line extensions that are innovative and unusual. Crest toothpaste recently introduced Mint Chocolate, Vanilla Mint and Lime Spearmint flavors. A serious concern with this strategy is that line extensions might cannibalize the sales of the original items in the line. Prior research has found that introducing new extensions often leads to cannibalization (Mason & Milne, 1994, Kerin, Harvey & Rothe, 1978, Copusky, 1976).

We examine the effect of introducing innovative line extensions on the choice of existing items in the line. Prior work on attribute transfer has found that perceptions of specific attributes can flow between a brand and its extensions (Keller and Aaker 1992; Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991). Furthermore, research on fit would suggest that line extensions should also transfer perceptions of attributes between the brand and its line extensions (Aaker and Keller 1990).

We specifically focus on whether an innovative line extension can transfer the perception of innovativeness back to the parent brand, making the brand more appealing. Previous work has found that higher perceived innovativeness is often related with more positive brand attitudes (Heath, DelVecchio, and McCarthy 2011). Thus, innovative brands are likely to be more positively evaluated and may increase purchase intent. We predict that introducing an innovative line extension will lead consumers to purchase a greater number of the brands existing items, ultimately reversing cannibalization.

Four experiments test our hypothesis. We first show that when a brand introduces innovative line extensions (versus non-innovative extensions), people choose to purchase more existing items (Studies 1A and 1B). We then show the effect replicates across various product categories and is mediated by perceived brand innovativeness (Study 2). Our last two studies rule out alternative explanations that 1) the effect is driven by disgust (Study 3) and 2) the effect is due to a contrast effect (Study 4).

In studies 1A (n=150) and 1B (n=601), participants were randomly assigned in a 3-cell (Extension: None, Non-Innovative, Innovative) between-subjects design. All participants saw three existing items offered by a hypothetical brand (Study 1A: Emmi’s) or a national brand (Study 1B: Breyer’s): Vanilla, Chocolate, and Strawberry. In addition to the existing items, participants saw three extension flavors based on their condition. Non-Innovative Extension: Cookies & Cream, Chocolate Chip, and Neapolitan. Innovative Extension: Garlic, Cheddar Cheese, and Avocado Jalapeno. No Extension: no extension items. After reading the list of items, participants indicated a purchase quantity for each item.

We found that choice quantity of existing items increased significantly when an innovative extension is introduced ($M_{extension}=2.63$, $M_{noextension}=2.40$) compared to a non-innovative extension ($M_{extension}=0.81$, $p<.001$), $M_{noextension}=1.07$, $p>.001$) or no extension ($M_{extension}=1.45$, $p<.001$; $M_{noextension}=1.64$, $p>.001$).

Study 2 (n=297) was designed to show our effect replicates in other product categories and to examine if perceived brand innovativeness mediates this effect. The procedure was identical to study 1A, except that we used Kai’s Toothpaste in place of Emmi’s Ice Cream. Toothpaste flavors were substituted for the ice cream flavors. Replicating our previous findings, choice quantity of the existing items increased when innovative extensions were introduced ($M_{extension}=2.01$, $M_{noextension}=1.36$, $p<.01$), or no extensions ($M=1.53$, $p=.04$). Our prediction that innovative extensions will lead to an increase in perceived brand innovativeness was also confirmed. A test of mediation supports that introducing innovative extensions leads to higher perceived brand innovation, which ultimately increases choice quantity of existing items (95% CI: [-.30, -.03]).

Study 3 (n=246) was designed to rule out an alternative explanation of our results. One could argue that the innovative flavors are also disgusting, leading to an attraction effect, in which introducing inferior (or disgusting) options boosts the choice share of similar but superior options. We test this alternative explanation by altering both the relative disgust and relative innovativeness of flavors.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Innovativeness: low, high) x 2 (Disgust: low, high) between-subjects design. Participants followed the same procedure as study 1A, however, we changed the extension flavors participants saw. Participants saw extension flavors either high or low on disgust and high or low on innovativeness, depending on their condition. We found a main effect of innovativeness, such that more innovative extensions increased choice quantity of the existing items. Yet there was no main effect of disgust. These results suggest that higher levels of innovativeness, and not disgust, increase the choice of existing items in the product line. The interaction was not significant.

In study 4 (n=410), we address another alternative explanation, that if customers find the innovative extensions unappealing for any other reason, aside from disgust, the extensions may yield a contrast effect. To rule out this alternative explanation, we ran a study with a competitor brand in the choice set to show that only choice share of the existing items of the parent brand increased – not choice share of competing brands. The design was identical to study 1A, except that a competing brand was offered in the choice set. Scoops Ice Cream (competitor brand) offered: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Butter Pecan, Coffee, Mint. After seeing all items offered by both brands, participants indicated the number of each item (from Emmi’s and Scoops) that they would purchase.

Replicating our main effect, we find that when Emmi’s offers innovative extensions, people choose more existing items ($M=1.35$) than when no extensions ($M=1.08$, $p=.06$) or non-innovative extensions are offered ($M=0.67$, $p<.001$). People chose more items in total (existing + extensions) from Emmi’s when innovative extensions are offered ($M=2.41$) compared to non-innovative extensions ($M=1.93$, $p<.01$). Most importantly, the total number of Scoops items chosen did not increase when Emmi’s introduced innovative extensions ($M=2.62$) compared to no extensions ($M=2.78$, $F(1, 407)<1$), suggesting that an innovative extension does not benefit all brands (e.g., through a contrast effect), but mainly benefits the parent brand.

Altogether, we find evidence that innovative line extensions may reverse the effect of cannibalization. Innovative extensions increase perceptions of the brand’s innovativeness, which leads consumers to purchase a higher quantity of the original items in the line.
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The Name Game: How Naming Promotes Effects Beneficial to Marketers

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Toyota is encouraging car owners to name their cars and has provided close to 100,000 name badges for owners to affix to their autos (Diaz 2015). Yet, the phenomenon of consumers naming even nonhuman-like products has not been examined by academic researchers. When a person spontaneously names an inanimate object (such as a car), the person is probably doing so because he likes the object. But what about the inverse: what happens when a company asks or directs the consumer to name an object? In the research reported here, we hypothesize and find that naming of products bestows benefits to the products when consumers are directed or requested to name them.

We hypothesize that naming of an object may increase liking for it because it increases feelings of ownership. Naming is an activity generally performed for newborns or pets in one’s family, or for nonhuman objects (e.g. dolls, cars, stuffed animals) that the namer believes to “be mine”. Abundant research on the endowment effect has shown that when consumers take ownership of an object, it increases in value (e.g. Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990). These endowment or ownership effects are also found when consumers feel psychological (rather than actual) ownership. (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2003).

Study 1 explores the basic effect of naming and whether it persists over time. Student participants were recruited for a two-part study on stress reduction. Participants were randomly assigned to either a naming or no-name condition. During the first lab session, all participants received a plain yellow stress ball and were either instructed to name it or not. Four weeks later, participants were asked to report how much someone would have to pay them to buy their stress ball from them. As predicted, the naming condition placed greater emphasis on the stress ball than those in the no-name condition, F(1,38) = 4.42, p < .05. In fact, price values were remarkably more than $1 higher for participants in the naming than no-name condition (M = $4.07 vs. $2.67).

In Study 2 participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: naming, non-name, assigned descriptive name “Blue”, or assigned non-descriptive name “Steve”. All participants viewed a picture of a stapler. Participants in the naming condition were asked to provide a name for it whereas in the assigned name conditions the stapler had already been given a name. An ANOVA revealed a significant effect of condition, F(3, 196) = 3.75, p = .01, on purchase intention. Purchase intentions were highest in the naming condition (M = 4.49), followed by the “Blue” (M = 3.75), “Steve” (M = 3.74) and no name (M = 3.50) conditions. Planned contrasts showed that purchase intent was higher in the naming condition than each individual condition (p’s < .05). Additionally, mediation analysis demonstrated that psychological ownership mediated this effect.

In Study 3 we compare the effects of naming for an unbranded product (laptop) and for a brand product with a strong prior brand image (Apple laptop). Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (brand, no brand) X 4 (naming, non-name, assigned descriptive name “Slimbook”, or assigned non-descriptive name “George”) between-subjects design. Participants reported their attitudes toward the laptop on five items. Results revealed in the unbranded condition favorability was highest in the naming condition (M = 5.03), followed by the “Slimbook” (M = 4.63), no name (M = 4.51) and “George” (M = 4.44) conditions. Planned contrasts showed the naming condition was significantly higher than all the other conditions individually (all p’s < .10). For the branded condition, none of the contrasts were significant (all p’s > .10). Once again, the naming effect was significantly mediated by psychological ownership. Potential alternative mediators such as attachment, self-efficacy, and involvement were not significant.

Study 4 attempted to understand what name features drive self-name success. We employed a mixed design where product (stapler, mug) was a between-subjects factor and name condition (no name, assigned descriptive name, assigned non-descriptive name) was a within-subjects factor (p’s > .05). There was no difference in the product conditions and so these data were collapsed for analysis. A repeated measures ANOVA on attitudes (F(2, 240) = 58.10, p < .01) and purchase intentions (F(2, 240) = 55.76, p < .01) revealed a significant main effect of name. Participants reported higher attitudes (M = 5.34) and purchase intentions (M = 4.84) for self-names than assigned descriptive names (attitudes: M = 4.26; purchase intentions: M = 3.89) or non-descriptive (attitudes: M = 3.36; purchase intentions: M = 2.98) names. Participants also reported higher attitudes and purchase intentions for descriptive versus non-descriptive names (all p’s < .05). Furthermore, the MORE macro (Montoya and Hayes 2017) for repeated measures designs demonstrated that this effect was driven by psychological ownership which in turn was driven by the fit and creativity of the name.

Study 5 compares the effects of naming to a form of co-creation, designing a mug. Student participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: naming, no-name, and designing. In the design condition, participants were given colored pencils to design a mug. All participants completed the same scales used in Study 3. An ANOVA on attitudes revealed a significant main effect (F(2, 101) = 10.37, p < .01). Participants reported higher attitudes for self-design (M = 5.23) than non-name (M = 4.48) or the control (M = 3.61). Importantly, participants still reported higher attitudes for self-name versus the control (all p’s < .05). Once again, this effect was mediated by psychological ownership. Interestingly, affective commitment also mediated the positive impact of self-design but did not mediate the difference between self-name and the control condition.

REFERENCES

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Each year billions of pounds of produce are thrown away due to aesthetic imperfections (i.e., blemishes, unconventional shapes; Bratskeir 2015), often because retailers and consumers refuse to purchase products that fail to meet strict cosmetic standards for visual perfection (Royte 2016). Interestingly, as safe-to-eat fruits and vegetables are discarded because of their imperfect appearance, food manufacturers and restaurant chains intentionally manufacture products that are aesthetically imperfect. For example, employees at Domino’s Pizza purposefully shape dough into irregular rectangles when preparing Artisan Pizza (Choi 2013). Why is it that retailers and manufacturers discard fruits and vegetables that contain aesthetic imperfections yet design processed foods to contain aesthetic imperfections?

In contrast to conventional wisdom that “beautiful is good” (Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998), our research provides evidence that in some cases consumers prefer aesthetically imperfect (vs. perfect) foods. We show that preference for aesthetically perfect (vs. imperfect) food depends on the level of mechanical processing the food has undergone. Specifically, in four studies we show that when given a choice between unprocessed foods (e.g., two apples) consumers prefer the aesthetically perfect option. However, when given the choice between two processed foods (e.g., two bowls of applesauce) consumers prefer the aesthetically imperfect option. These effects are attenuated for both unprocessed and processed foods when individuals have the opportunity to sample the items before choosing.

First, we conducted a pretest to identify images of unprocessed and processed foods that differed in terms of the degree of visual perfection, but were similar in terms of healthiness, size, and safety. In the main experiment (study 1a), members of an online panel were randomly assigned to view either a pair of unprocessed foods (i.e., carrots) or a pair of processed foods (i.e., pizzas). For each pair, one option was aesthetically perfect and the other option was aesthetically imperfect (as determined by the pretest). Participants were asked to indicate which item they would prefer to eat. The results showed that participants who viewed the pair of unprocessed foods were significantly more likely to choose the aesthetically perfect option than participants who viewed the pair of processed foods ($P_{carrots} = 79.59\%$ vs. $P_{processed} = 58.82\%$; $\chi^2 = 5.039$, $p < .05$).

One shortcoming of study 1a is that we used two different food items for the processed and unprocessed foods. In study 1b we address this shortcoming by using the same food item and varying only the level of mechanical processing. Study 1b had a one-factor between subjects design with two experimental conditions (food type: processed vs. unprocessed). Members of an online panel ($N = 71$, $M_{age} = 30.30$; $52.1\%$ females) were randomly assigned to view a pair of apples (unprocessed condition) that were the same weight and type but varied in appearance (i.e., one had a uniform shape and texture and the other had a variable shape and texture). Participants in the processed condition viewed two bowls of applesauce. The applesauce was created by mechanically processing (i.e., blending) an apple and water. Each bowl contained the same amount of applesauce, but the bowls varied in appearance. The aesthetically perfect applesauce had a uniform texture and color due to a lack of apple chunks and apple skin. The aesthetically imperfect applesauce had a variable texture and color due to the presence of apple chunks and skin. The lateral position of the options was counterbalanced. After viewing the pair of foods participants indicated their preference ($1 = \text{definitely option A}$, $7 = \text{definitely option B}$). The data was prepared so that “option A” always represented the aesthetically perfect food option. A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants had a stronger preference for the aesthetically perfect option when they viewed unprocessed (vs. processed) foods ($M_{processed} = 4.3056$ vs. $M_{unprocessed} = 6.1714$; $F (1, 69) = 25.587$, $p < .01$).

Consumers rely on heuristics when information is ambiguous (Kruger et al. 2004), but are less likely to use such heuristics when information is unambiguous. Thus, in the context food choices, the effect of aesthetic imperfections should be less influential in driving choice when taste information is available (i.e., unambiguous). Study 2a tested this idea using a one factor between subjects experiment (taste information present vs. absent). Participants ($N = 71$) chose between an aesthetically perfect and imperfect unprocessed food (i.e., whole oranges). The key finding was that participants were significantly more likely to choose the aesthetically imperfect orange when they had the opportunity to sample prior to choosing than when they did not have the opportunity to sample prior to choosing ($P_{sampling present} = 53.66\%$ vs. $P_{sampling absent} = 16.67\%$; $\chi^2 = 10.059$, $p < .01$). Study 2b was similar to study 2a except that the study was a field experiment at a grocery store and shoppers ($N = 41$) choose between two processed foods (i.e., cookies) when taste information was present or absent. The results showed that preference for the aesthetically imperfect cookie decreased when taste information was present (i.e., when individuals were allowed to sample the food before choice) ($P_{multi-sensory present} = 54.0\%$ vs. $P_{multi-sensory absent} = 71.7\%$; $\chi^2 = 3.461$, $p = .07$). Collectively, studies 2a and 2b suggest that retailers can overcome the effects of aesthetic imperfections on food choice by providing diagnostic taste information.

The results of four studies show that consumers prefer aesthetically perfect (vs. imperfect) unprocessed foods and aesthetically imperfect (vs. perfect) processed foods. These effects are attenuated for both unprocessed and processed foods when individuals have the opportunity to sample the items before choosing. Theoretically, our findings contribute novel evidence that the “form” of a product moderates the influence of visual aesthetics on choice. While much is known about the stimulus factors and individual differences that drive aesthetic impressions (e.g., Veryzer & Hutchinson 1998), we demonstrate that visual aesthetics can have either a positive or, counterintuitively, a negative influence on consumer choice. Our findings also contribute evidence that food processing influences consumer food choices (Szocs and Lefebvre 2016). From a sustainability perspective, our findings provide evidence that multi-sensory information can increase consumers’ acceptance of visually imperfect produce.

REFERENCES


**Punishing Politeness: Moderating Role of Belief in Just World on Severity?**

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Three studies demonstrate that politeness in advertising affects how consumers punish brands for unethical behavior. Those low in belief in just world (BJW) were more likely to punish a brand when more polite language was used. Both cynicism and trust mediated the effect of ethical practice on level of punishment.

**Introduction**

People are more likely to apply moral judgements to psychologically distant situations (Eyal et al. 2008). Psychological distance can be influenced through language. One aspect of language, politeness, has been shown to increase social distance between speakers (Brown and Levinson 1987; Holtgraves and Yang 1990; 1992). The purpose of this research is to understand the effect of politeness on moral judgements of the actions of brands.

We show that polite language in advertising can affect consumers’ intentions to punish a brand whose actions are ethically ambiguous. We explore the role of belief in a just world (BJW) when making such judgments. In addition, we also explore the underlying mechanism of trust and cynicism that drives punishment and moral perception of the brand.

**Conceptual Development**

**Politeness**

Formal titles, e.g. sir or Mister, are considered more polite than less formal terms of address, e.g. dude or mate (Ambady et al. 1996; Brown and Levinson 1987; Clark and Schunk 1980; Holtgraves and Yang 1990; 1992). Polite speech, however, increases the perception of social distance between speakers (Brown and Gilman 1989; Brown and Gilman 1960; Holtgraves and Yang 1990; 1992). Situational factors can also cause otherwise polite speech to be considered manipulative, sarcastic, or even offensive (Watts 2003).

The greater the psychological distance, the more abstract people’s thinking (Trope and Liberman 2010). More polite speech is associated with a higher level of psychological distance (Stephan et al. 2010). Judgements of morality are also associated with psychological distance. The greater the social distance between parties involved in a moral transgression, the more morally wrong an action is perceived (Eyal et al. 2008). It therefore follows that more polite speech, which increases social distance, should also increase the perception that a moral transgression is wrong.

**Belief in a Just World**

BJW is a belief that people get what they deserve (Lerner 1980). When encountering an injustice, BJW motivates us to punish a victimizer (Lerner 1980). Those high in BJW are more likely to punish those who violate social norms (Zhu et al. 2012). Those low in BJW perceive others as more motivated by self-interest, and that they believe that people often exploit others to their advantage (Lipkus 1992). BJW has also been shown to be related to psychological distance, such that as psychological distance increases, so too does BJW (Warner et al. 2012). As such, we believe that when more polite speech is used, social distance increases, so too does the need to restore justice.

**Cynicism and Trust**

Cynicism and trust are two important dimensions of moral judgment (Turner and Valentine 2001). The goals or values which motivate cynicism can be described by the belief that firms are disguising their own self-interest with altruism (Helm 2004; Odou and de Pecheyrou 2011). Cynical consumers seem to be motivated by a desire to punish companies whom they distrust (Helm 2004). Trust is the belief that the motives of others will be beneficial to one’s interests (Turner and Valentine 2001). Brand trust is the ability of a brand to elicit trust from consumers (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). Trusting consumers seem to be motivated by a desire to reward trustworthy companies (Helm 2004).

**Study 1**

The objective of Study 1 was to evaluate whether consumers would penalize brands differently based on the politeness demonstrated in an advertisement by the brand.

**Design and Participants**

Participants (N = 124; 54.8% female; Mpoliteness = 35.79) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (politeness: control vs. less polite vs. more polite). Participants were asked to review an advertisement for a fictitious apparel brand called CJ. In the more polite condition, the tag line was the same as in the control condition followed by the word sir, and in the less polite condition, was followed by the word dude. Participants were then randomly presented with one of two press reports. They were that CJ was recently in the news and that a press report stated either: CJ purchases clothes from manufacturers that do not use child labor, however the manufacturers do not provide health care benefits to their employees (pretested M = 3.93, SD = 1.34) or that CJ uses low impact dyes, but the colors fade in clothing and are not durable (pretested M = 4.25, SD = 1.54). These two statements were not significantly different on ethical rating (p = .38).

**Procedures and Measures**

Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with the statement, “I feel that CJ did something morally wrong,” (anchored: 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; adapted from Cheng, Ottati, and Price, 2013). Then they were asked to, “Rate the degree of punishment for such behavior,” (anchored: 1 = lenient; 7 = severe; adapted from Cheng, Ottati, and Price 2013). Participants then completed the sixteen-item measure of BJW scale (and Peplau 1973).

**Results**

An ANCOVA was conducted with politeness in the advertisement and the composite score of BJW (α = .90) as predictors of punishment. There was a significant effect of politeness in advertising on severity of punishment (F(2, 118) = 3.42, p < .05, η² = .055). There was also a significant effect of BJW on severity of punishment (F(1, 118) = 6.05, p < .05, η² = .049). There was a significant interaction between politeness in the advertisement and the BJW (F(2, 118) = 3.09, p < .05, η² = .05). A spotlight analysis revealed that when BJW was high, the punishment judgments did not vary significantly among the three advertisement conditions (p = .67). The control (M = 3.60, SD = 1.34) did not vary from the high politeness condition (M = 3.00, SD = 2.55, p = .65), which in turn did not vary from the low politeness condition (M = 4.00, SD = 1.73). It was only when the BJW was low that participants reduced the severity of punishment for the control (M = 1.40, SD = .54) and in comparison to the more polite condition (M = 3.63, SD = 2.20; F(1, 118) = 4.80, p < .05). The
punishment was low even for the less polite condition as well ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.21$) in comparison to the more polite condition ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 2.20$; $F(1, 118) = 3.83$, $p < .05$). This result was despite the fact that the interaction of BJW and politeness in the advertisement on morality judgments was not significant ($p = .22$).

Discussion

Those low in BJW indicated higher punishment for the brand which used more polite language over the brand with less polite language and the control. Thus, our hypothesis that the consumers will penalize brands differently based on the politeness of the language used in an advertisement was supported.

Study 2

The objective of Study 2 was to evaluate whether the penalty imposed on different brands would manifest in the fine amounts.

Design and Participants

Participants ($N = 167$; 56.9% female; $M_{age} = 34.08$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (levels of politeness in advertising: more polite vs. less polite). Participants were asked to review an advertisement of the fictitious coffee brand called Jaunt. The tag line used in the advertisement varied on two levels of politeness. In the more polite condition, participants read *Are you going to have a cup of coffee?* In the less polite condition, participants read *Gonna have a cup of coffee?* Participants were then told: *Recently, Jaunt was in the press.* The press report noted that: *Jaunt collaborates with local farmers in Peru, but they do not contribute to infrastructure improvement in Peru* (pretested $M = 3.64$; $SD = 1.51$). Participants were then asked to quantify the punishment levied against the brand.

Procedures and Measures

Participants were asked *If the Peru government had to levy a fine on Jaunt what would it be?* Participants were asked to indicate the fine for the company on a $0$ to $250,000.00$ sliding scale (modified from previous research where consumers levied fines for company misconduct [e.g. Ashton-James and Tracy 2012; Rosenblatt et al. 1989]). Following this, participants were asked the BJW scale as used in Study 1.

Results

Hypothesis Testing. An ANCOVA was conducted with politeness in the advertisement and the composite score of BJW ($\alpha = .89$) as predictors of the fines levied by participants. There was a significant effect of politeness in advertising the fine levied ($F(1, 163) = 5.34$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .032$). There was also a significant effect of BJW on severity of punishment ($F(1, 163) = 3.75$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .023$). There was a significant interaction between politeness in the advertisement and BJW ($F(1, 164) = 3.92$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .025$). A spotlight analysis revealed that when BJW was high, the fine did not vary significantly among the two levels of politeness ($p = .96$). Specifically, the fine levied in the more polite condition ($M = 10,626.63$, $SD = 29,806.24$) did not vary from the less polite condition ($M = 10,138.91$, $SD = 28,869.13$). It was only when BJW was low that the fine levied was low for the less polite condition ($M = 23,614.33$, $SD = 38,476$) in comparison to the more polite condition ($M = 240,904.92$, $SD = 433,574.67$; $F(1, 163) = 7.75$, $p < .01$). This result was even though the interaction of BJW and politeness in the advertisement on morality judgments was not significant ($p = .34$).

Discussion

Those high in BJW showed no significant difference in the fine as a measure of punishment between two advertisements with varied politeness levels in the language. Those low in BJW, however, indicated a higher fine for the brand which used more polite language. It seems plausible that when individuals believe that people get what they deserve, the effectiveness of punishment would be diminished. By the same token those low in BJW, would probably view the advertising strategy of adopting politeness as an attempt at misleading consumers.

Study 3

The objective of this study was to evaluate the role of both brand trust in a brand and the consumer cynicism in the observed condemnation by consumers. To evaluate this, we adopted ethical statements that were judged to be either low or high on ethical ratings in the pretest.

Design and Participants

Participants ($N = 162$; 56.2% female; $M_{age} = 37.7$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (ethical rating: high vs. low). A known brand (GEICO) was selected for this study. Participants were told that GEICO was recently in the press. In the low ethical condition, participants read: *A press report noted that GEICO hires women who work in cooperatives, however, these women are sometimes criminals who don’t pay their taxes* (pretested $M = 2.77$; $SD = 1.17$). Participants in the high ethical condition read: *A press report noted that GEICO helps disadvantaged communities, but the help is only through volunteer service and not monetary in nature* (pretested $M = 5.16$; $SD = 1.41$). These two statements were significantly different on ethical rating ($t(58.01) = 7.22$, $p < .001$).

Procedures and Measures

After reviewing the advertisement and the press statement, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which GEICO did something morally wrong on the same scale as used in Study 1. Participants were also asked to provide ratings to capture cynicism or trust on a two-item scale: *I feel cynical about GEICO; I feel skeptical about GEICO’s business practices* (anchored: 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Then brand trust was captured using three items: *I trust GEICO; GEICO is an honest brand; GEICO is a safe brand* (anchored: 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

Results

Morbidity and Punishment. An analysis of the effect of ethical practice on perception that GEICO did something morally wrong was higher when presented with a less ethical practice ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.53$) in comparison to the more ethical practice ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.50$; $t(159.94) = 6.34$, $p < .001$). An analysis of the effect of ethical practice on severity of punishment yielded a significant difference with participants wanting more punishment for the less ethical practice ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.33$) in comparison to the more ethical practice ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.50$; $t(160) = 8.06$; $p < .001$).

Mediation Analysis. To determine whether cynicism or trust accounted for participants’ perception of GEICO, we conducted a mediation analysis (Hayes 2012, Model 4; bootstrapped with 5,000 draws). The analysis revealed that although the ethical practice influenced both cynicism and trust, only cynicism mediated the relationship between how ethical GEICO’s practice was and participant’s perception of how moral GEICO was (95% CI = [−.42, −.04]) but trust did not mediate the relationship between how ethical GEICO’s practice was and participant’s perception of how moral GEICO was (95% CI = [−.02, .22]). On the other hand, when the same mediation analysis (Hayes 2012, Model 4; bootstrapped with 5,000 draws) was conducted, both cynicism (95% CI = [−.50, −.06]) and trust (95% CI = [.01, .31]) mediated the effect of ethical practice on level of punishment.
Discussion. The participants of Study 3 indicated that GEICO did more morally wrong when the brand was presented with the less ethical practice than with the more ethical practice. They punished GEICO more for their less ethical practice compared to the more ethical practice. The result indicated that the participants felt more cynical when they were exposed to GEICO performing a less ethical practice in comparison to the more ethical practice. Individuals trusted GEICO more when presented with a more ethical practice than a less ethical practice. Mediation analyses showed that cynicism was the only mediator of the relationship between the ethical practice and moral perception. Both trust and cynicism were found to be significant mediators of the relationship between ethical practice of the brand and punishment.

General Discussion

We add on work by Eyal et al. (2008) by showing that politeness increases social distance and increased social distance leads to greater judgements of wrongdoing. Based on past research on BJW, our findings show that the language used in a brand’s advertising can potentially harm the brand when it is undergoing a brand crisis (i.e., an ambiguously unethical business practice reported by the media). Individuals in our studies consistently showed that they would more likely punish a brand which used more polite language in their advertising compared to the brand which used less polite language. Our results showed that the influence of the politeness of the language used in advertising was only significant for the individuals with low BJW. These results correspond to past findings that those low in BJW believe people often exploit others to their advantage, particularly those of higher power and status (Lipkus 1992). Thus, a possible explanation would be that those low in BJW were more cautious of the actions of the brand and thus reacted to its unethical business practice differently.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In some contexts, individuals eat while maintaining a seated posture (e.g., at restaurants, in-home dining). However, in other contexts individuals eat while maintaining a standing posture (e.g., at cocktail parties, grocery store sampling stations). Would eating the same food while sitting (vs. standing) influence taste evaluations? That is, how does posture influence taste?

Given that restaurants are beginning to experiment with the standing only concept that has long been popular outside of the United States (Fujita 2013), this finding has important practical implications. In addition, while prior research has examined how the effects of body orientation on consumer decision making much of this work has been done through the lens of embodied cognition (Labroo and Nielsen 2010; Strack, Martin and Stepper 1988). We know of no research that has examined the effects of posture on taste.

We build on literature that shows that standing leads to greater physiological stress than sitting (Abalan et al. 1992) and link it with work that shows that stress decreases the reward value (i.e., liking) of hedonic stimuli (Pizzagalli et al. 2007). We predict that because standing increases physiological stress and stress decreases reward value of hedonic stimuli, consumers will rate the same food as better tasting if they sample while maintaining a sitting (vs. standing) posture. We test this hypothesis and the mediating effect of stress in a series of four experimental studies.

Study 1 examined the basic effect of posture on taste using a single factor between subjects design (posture: sitting vs. standing). Participants (M_{age} = 24.39; 50% females) sampled a cookie and rated the taste (Elder and Krishna 2010). Participants also rated their physiological stress/tension and hunger levels. We measured hunger because hunger influences food evaluations (Lozano, Crites and Aikman 1999). The results of an ANCOVA with hunger as a covariate showed that individuals who ate the cookie while seated perceived it as better tasting than individuals who ate the cookie while standing (M_{sitting} = 4.96 vs. M_{standing} = 4.22; F(1, 81) = 5.44, p < .05). Tests for mediation using Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) 5,000 bootstrap samples showed that the indirect effects of posture on taste evaluations through the mediator perceived stress/tension (with hunger included as a covariate) yielded a confidence interval that did not include zero (B = .1497, SE = .099, 90% CI: .008, .4193) suggesting that stress/tension mediates the effect of posture on taste.

Then, Study 2 replicated the basic effects of posture on taste and also provided physiological evidence that standing postures were associated with greater stress by measuring participants’ heart rate. Study 2 had a one-factor between subjects design and was conducted in two phases because prior research shows that consuming indulgent foods increase heart rate (Brown et al. 2008). The first phase involved individuals sampling a cookie while standing (vs. sitting) and then rating the taste. The second phase, which occurred approximately 3 weeks later involved capturing individuals pulse while they were maintaining the same posture they had in the first phase of the study. Eighty undergraduate students participated in this study however two students did not complete both phases leaving a final sample of seventy-eight (M_{age} = 24.01; 47.4% females). An ANCOVA with hunger as a covariate showed that participants perceived the cookie as better tasting when they ate it while sitting (M_{sitting} = 4.35 vs. M_{standing} = 3.86; F(1, 75) = 3.39, p = .07). There was also a significant effect of posture on heart rate with heart rate being higher for standing (vs. sitting) postures (M_{sitting} = 72.13 vs. M_{standing} = 83.28; (F(1, 76) = 13.13, p < .01).

If standing is influencing taste by increasing stress then this effect should persist in the absence of a stress prime, but should be attenuated when stress is primed due to decreases in perceived taste when individuals are stressed and seated. Study 3 tested this prediction with a 2 (posture: sitting vs. standing) x 2 (stress: present vs. absent) between subjects design. One hundred and twenty undergraduate students participated in this study (M_{age} = 22.62; 40.9% females); however, four individuals did not complete the key dependent measures leaving a final sample of one hundred sixteen. To manipulate stress individuals completed a timed word jumble task (Zellner et al. 2006). Subsequently, individuals sampled a cookie sitting or standing. The results a 2 (posture) x 2 (stress) ANCOVA with hunger as the covariate revealed a significant interaction (F(1, 111) = 12.156, p = .001). In the absence of a stress prime, participants who ate the cookie when sitting perceived it as better tasting (M_{sitting} = 5.79 vs. M_{standing} = 4.60; F(1, 112) = 12.63, p < .01). However, when stress was primed there was no difference in taste based on whether participants sampled while sitting (vs. standing) (M_{sitting} = 4.74 vs. M_{standing} = 4.86; F(1, 112) = .112, p = .738).

Finally, in Study 4 we wanted to show that relaxation can relieve the stress associated with standing and attenuate the effects of posture on taste by increasing taste evaluations when individuals are standing. Study 4 had a 2 (posture: sitting vs. standing) x 2 (relaxation: present vs. absent) between subjects design. Posture was manipulated through the presence or absence of chairs. Relaxation was manipulated through the presence of different types of ambient music (Pham, Hung and Gorn 2011). Participants (N = 111; M_{age} = 21.86; 64.9% females) sampled and evaluated a cream-filled wafer cookie. The results showed that, in the absence of relaxation participants perceived the cookie as better tasting when they were sitting (M_{sitting} = 5.70 vs. M_{standing} = 4.79; F(1, 107) = 6.22, p < .05). However, when relaxation was primed taste evaluations when standing increased and there was no significant difference in taste based on posture (M_{sitting} = 5.48 vs. M_{standing} = 5.67; F(1, 107) = .266. p = .607).

Collectively, the results of four studies show that posture systematically effects taste evaluations by increasing physiological stress.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Advertisers often include both the focal product’s picture and a context picture that illustrates the brand’s benefits in a print advertisement. In some cases, a product’s visual appearance is an important information to the viewers (Lazarus 1982, 1991; Yeung and Wyer 2004). In other cases, however, presenting the focal product’s picture does not provide much additional information, especially when the product mainly provides non-visual benefits (e.g., service), or when consumers are already familiar with the product’s appearance (e.g., coffee, tea). Then, when presenting the product’s picture does not provide additional value to the ad viewers, how will the absence (vs. presence) of a product’s picture affect consumers’ evaluations of the ad and the brand being advertised? The present research bears on this question.

Previous literature has suggested that people respond to pictures in a holistic manner (Spohr and Lehmkuehle 1982), which facilitates the appreciation of the picture’s aesthetics and feelings (Holbrook and Moore 1981). Although responses to pictures are typically holistic, a visually prominent feature or an a priori motive to inspect a specific element can induce a shift from a globalized to a localized processing manner (Spohr and Lehmkuehle 1982; Hochstein and Ahissar 2002). Based on this logic, consumers are assumed to approach an ad in a global manner. However, since consumers are normally aware of the promotional intent of an advertisement, their subsequent attention is likely to be quickly directed to the focal product’s picture (if any). As a result, consumers are likely to quickly shift from processing the holistic features of the ad to attending to the product’s picture, facilitating a local processing manner. Furthermore, since the appreciation of the context picture that conveys feelings often requires holistic processing (Escalas 2014; Green and Brock 2000), a local processing manner will reduce consumers’ appreciation of the affect-laden benefits. Thus, we propose that when the product’s appearance cannot contribute much to an appraisal of its quality, the omission of a picture of the product in an advertisement can increase consumers’ affective responses to the ad, and in turn can increase ad and brand evaluations as well as purchase intentions.

Using four different sets of stimuli, the first set of experiments examined the positive effect of the omission of a product’s picture. Experiment 1a employed a 2 (product presence: absent vs. present) X 2 (ad stimulus: Lay’s potato chips vs. Turkish Airlines) between-subjects design. The Lay’s chips ad depicted a scene of a girl enjoying eating. The product’s picture, a bag of potato chips was either printed on the lower left-hand side of the ad or not. The Turkish Airlines ad showed the silhouette of a girl standing on the beach, looking up into the sky. The product’s picture, an airplane, was either presented in the sky or absent from the ad. As expected, regardless of the ad stimulus, compared to the presence of a product’s picture, the absence of the picture increased brand evaluation (6.35 vs. 7.02; F(1, 114) = 4.76, p < .05), ad evaluation (5.02 vs. 5.51; F(1, 114) = 4.42, p < .05), and affective reaction (4.46 vs. 5.09; F(1, 114) = 6.64, p < .05). Besides, bootstrapping analyses showed that affective reaction mediates the effects of product presence on brand and ad evaluations. Experiment 1b and 1c replicated these findings using an ad of foot massage and an ad of tea ware, respectively.

Experiment 2 tested three alternative explanations. First, consumers might perceive the absence of the product’s picture as a mystery, enhancing favourableness. Second, consumers might try to imagine the appearance of the product when it is absent (Sengupta and Gorn 2002), and the self-generated product’s image might be more attractive. Third, the product’s picture might be unattractive and thus lead to negative impressions. To rule out these explanations, Experiment 2 manipulated whether the product’s picture was revealed after participants had viewed an ad for tea but before they made evaluations. If the positive product omission effect was driven by any of the above explanations, this effect should be eliminated after the product revelation. Results showed that ad evaluation was higher when product’s picture was not shown than when it was (4.64 vs. 3.82; F(1, 115) = 9.37, p < .01), independent of product revelation (Fs < 1).

Experiment 3 and 4 tested an important moderator. We assume that appreciation of the context picture requires holistic processing. However, if the context picture is highly relevant to the viewers’ current life experiences, they are likely to integrate his or her relevant personal experiences into the simulation of the content, which involves a detailed and concrete processing strategy (Zhao, Dahl and Hoeffer 2014). As a result, the global processing manner triggered by the absence of a product’s picture will impair this self-relevant imagery and decrease the affective reactions evoked by the simulated experience. Consequently, omitting the product’s picture will have negative effects.

To test this proposition, participants in Experiment 3 browsed an ad for a bridal cake. The context picture depicted a hugging couple. Participants indicated their current romantic relationship status. If they were in a relationship, their simulation was likely to involve their personal experiences, resulting in a negative product omission effect. If participants were not, however, a positive product omission effect should occur. A significant interaction of product’s picture and relationship status (F(1, 117) = 6.47, p < .05) confirmed this prediction. Participants who were not in relationship evaluated the brand more favorably when the product’s picture was absent than when it was present (6.76 vs. 6.22; F(1, 117) = 3.71, p = .06). In contrast, participants who were in a relationship rated the brand less favorably in the former condition than in the latter condition (6.29 vs. 5.74; F(1, 117) = 2.88, p = .09). Experiment 4 replicated these findings using an ad of coffee and manipulating the content of the ad as either a study or a business scenario, which was either relevant to the student participants or not.

In summary, four experiments demonstrated that leaving out (vs. presenting) the product’s picture in an ad can lead to a positive effect on evaluations of the ad and the brand. These findings provide practical implications to advertisement design.

REFERENCE


“I Am What You Eat”: Parents’ Morality is Inferred from the Products they Choose for their Children
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current research utilizes and extends attribution theory (Heider 1958; Kelley 1967) to develop a model of “parental surrogate consumption,” or, purchasing products or services that one’s child will subsequently consume. Most broadly, we argue that parental surrogate consumption represents a moral consumption behavior, as such consumption stands to directly impact the health and well-being of another individual (i.e., the child) who does not possess regular or complete control over the goods or services he or she consumes (Vitell 2003). From this framework, we demonstrate that perceptions of parents’ morality are influenced by the consumption choices they make for their children, and show that the strength of such moral attributions is dependent on perceptions of behavioral consistency and control.

Conceptual Background

Parental Surrogate Consumption

Parents represent a sizeable market; in the United States alone 53 percent of consumers aged 18 to 40 report having at least one child (Newport and Wilke 2013). In the European Union, nearly 30 percent of all households contain at least one child (Eurostat 2016). These parents as a group spend billions annually on products and services for their children, from toys and sports leagues to food, clothing, and medical care (Lino 2014). Yet to date consumer researchers have not examined the impact that routinely making such interdependent choices has on parental consumers. Rather, the bulk of existing research on parent-child consumption has focused on consumer socialization (e.g., John 1999) or children’s perceptions of products or advertising (e.g., Zhang and Sood 2002). Given the powerful role parents play in children’s consumption behavior, it is important for consumer researchers to examine how routinely making these interdependent choices—heretofore named “parental surrogate consumption”—impacts parental consumers. Importantly, the non-elective and power imbalanced nature of parental surrogate consumption distinguishes it from previously examined forms of marketplace surrogate consumption (Solomon 1986). Though parental surrogate consumption can take many forms, in the current research we examine the consumption of food products, and hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Consumers view parental surrogate consumption as a moral issue, and rate parents who choose healthy products for their children as more moral than parents who choose unhealthy products for their children.

Attribution Theory

When consumers make consumption decisions, they are conveying information about themselves to onlookers (Belk 1988). Attribution theory (Heider 1958; Jones and Davis 1965) examines how people utilize choice and behavioral information to form impressions of others’ character traits (i.e., form “internal” attributions; Weiner 1985).

Consistency. According to attribution theory, character attributions are formed when behaviors are perceived as being consistent with an individual’s typical pattern of behavior (Jones and Davis 1965). One particularly salient cue that consumers utilize to infer behavioral consistency with respect to food consumption is body weight; consumers typically infer that individuals who are overweight must consistently consume calorie-laden foods (Brownell 1991). In the current research we examine moral attributions formed based on single, one-time parental surrogate consumption behaviors, and manipulate perceptions of consistency using children’s physical characteristics.

Hypothesis 2: Consumers utilize children’s physical characteristics as a proxy for consistency information, and adjust their moral attributions accordingly.

Control. The second key determinant for forming character attributions is perceptions of control. According to attribution theory, character attributions are formed only when individuals are perceived to be making a volitional, intentional choice (Jones and Davis 1965). There exists a rich body of work examining how people form attributions of consumers based on their own consumption decisions (e.g., Vartanian, Herman, and Polivy 2007; Williams and Steffel 2014). Yet, to our knowledge, researchers have not yet examined whether attributions are similarly formed based on the products consumers select for others. Attribution theory would suggest that in such instances character attributions will be formed for the individual in control of the consumption decision (the parent), but will not be extended to the eventual consumer (the child). Furthermore, parents should be relieved of blame for any unhealthy consumption behaviors made by their children outside of their supervision.

Hypothesis 3a: Consumers do not form moral attributions of children based on parental surrogate consumption information, as they are not perceived as being in control of their consumption choices.

Hypothesis 3b: Consumers only form moral attributions of parents based on parental surrogate consumption information to the degree that parents are perceived as being in control.

Experiment 1: Establishing Parental Surrogate Consumption as a Moral Consumption Behavior

Experiment 1 aims to establish parental surrogate consumption as a moral consumption behavior by demonstrating that consumers form moral attributions of parents based on the food products they select for their children.

Method

Participants were 397 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Two healthy and two unhealthy food items were selected from a pool of ten pre-tested snacks: apples with peanut butter, yogurt and fruit, a slice of cake, and a donut. All participants were randomly assigned to view one of these snack choices, then asked to rate its unhealthiness using two 6-point bipolar scales: healthy/unhealthy and wholesome/unwholesome (α = .92).
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After viewing each snack, participants were next presented with a hypothetical scenario stating the following: “8-year-old David has just gotten home from school, and it’s time for his after-school snack. David’s mother gives him…” followed by their assigned snack. Participants then were asked to make ratings of David’s mother’s morality, using four 6-point bipolar scales adapted from Steim and Nemeroff (1995): ethical/unethical, moral/immoral, kind-hearted/cruel, and caring/uncaring (α = .90), interspersed with four distractor scales.

Results and Discussion

Results of a one-way ANOVA confirmed a significant difference in morality ratings between conditions (F(3, 393) = 64.90, p < .001, η² = .33). Mothers who fed “David” apple slices (M = 5.23) and yogurt and fruit (M = 5.21) were rated as the most moral; mothers who fed “David” a donut (M = 3.98) and a slice of cake (M = 4.02) were rated as less moral. Across conditions, participants’ perceptions of parents’ morality were negatively correlated with their perceptions of snack unhealthiness (r(395) = -.60, p < .001), providing support for H1.

Experiment 2: The Moderating Role of Children’s Appearance

Experiment 2 examined whether the strength of moral attributions, formed via parental surrogate consumption information, is moderated by children’s physical appearance.

Method

Participants were 314 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (child weight) x 2 (snack type) design. All participants in all conditions were presented with an image of “8-year-old David.” In one condition David appeared to be of a healthy weight; in the second condition David was overweight. All participants read the same scenario presented in experiment 1, with either a donut or fruit with yogurt as the snack. After reading this scenario, participants were asked to make moral judgments of David’s mother (α = .92).

Results and Discussion

The joint impact of child weight and snack choice on perceptions of David’s mother was tested using a 2 x 2 ANOVA. Results revealed a significant main effect of child weight, such that participants perceived David’s mother to be less moral when her child was overweight (F(1, 310) = 58.09, p < .001, η² = .16). The main effect of food choice was also significant (F(1, 310) = 155.37, p < .001, η² = .33), with David’s mother being perceived as more moral when she chose a healthy snack, once again confirming H1. The interaction of food choice and child weight was significant (F(1, 310) = 12.57, p < .001, η² = .04), providing initial support for H2. Mothers who selected an unhealthy product for their child were punished more severely when that child was overweight.

Experiment 3: The Mediating Role of Consistency

This moderating role of child weight, as established in experiment 2, may be explained via the consistency dimension of attribution theory. When a mother selects an unhealthy product for her overweight child, consumers likely assume that such a choice is reflective of a consistent pattern of behavior. In experiment 3 we test this mechanism directly.

Method

Participants in experiment 3 were 405 adult Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions using the same 2 (child weight) x 2 (snack type) design and scenarios employed in experiment 2. After viewing “David” with his snack, participants were asked to rate the consistency with which they believed David’s mother selects that snack using five items (e.g., “David’s mother usually selects snacks like this for David to eat”; α = .94). Participants then provided moral judgments of David’s mother (α = .93).

Experiment 4: The Role of Perceived Control

In experiment 4 we incorporate perceived control into our model of parental surrogate consumption, by testing whether the choices that parents make impact the moral judgments formed of the children who are subjected to such choices.

Method

Participants in experiment 4 were 315 adult Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (child weight) x 2 (snack type) design, nearly identical to that utilized in experiment 2. In contrast to prior experiments, participants were asked to make moral judgments of David himself (α = .90).

Results and Discussion

The joint impact of child weight and food choice on perceptions of David was tested using a 2 x 2 ANOVA. Results revealed a significant main effect of child weight, such that participants perceived overweight David to be less moral (M = 4.12) than healthy weight David (M = 4.52; F(1, 311) = 16.15, p < .001, η² = .05). Importantly, the main effect of food choice failed to reach significance (F(1, 311) = 5.98, p = .05). The joint interaction of child weight and food choice, as well as the interaction of all three predictors, was significant (F(1, 311) = 6.80, p = .01, η² = .02), confirming H3a. The interaction of food choice and child weight also failed to reach significance (F(1, 311) = 5.98, p = .04, η² = .02). As David was not in control of his snack choice, consumers did not form character judgments of him based on his mother’s choices.

Experiment 5: The Joint Impact of Control and Consistency

In experiment 5 we investigate the joint impact of perceptions of control and consistency in forming moral attributions by manipulating control in our scenarios.

Method

Participants in experiment 5 were 468 adult Amazon Mechanical Turk workers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions using a 2 (child weight) x 2 (locus of control) design. Participants were first shown overweight or healthy weight “David.” They were then presented with one of two scenarios, both of which resulted in David consuming a donut as his snack. In the “mother control condition,” the scenario was identical to that utilized in previous experiments.
In the “David control condition,” participants read the following: “David just got home from school and it’s time for his after school snack. David’s mother left him yogurt with fruit in the refrigerator to eat as a snack. David instead grabs a donut out of his backpack that he got from the school cafeteria, and eats that as his snack.” This scenario was selected from a pool of six scenarios, pre-tested for perceptions of control. Participants in all conditions rated the consistency with which they believed David to consume donuts ($\alpha = .92$). Finally, all participants were asked to make moral judgments of David’s mother ($\alpha = .89$).

Results and Discussion

We tested our hypotheses using a moderated mediation analysis (Hayes 2013; PROCESS Model 14). The first model regressed child weight on perceptions of behavioral consistency, our mediator. The second model regressed child weight, perceptions of behavioral consistency, locus of control, and the interaction between locus of control and consistency on moral judgments. For full results and variable codings.

The conditional indirect effect of child weight on judgments of mothers’ morality was significant for the mother control condition ($B = -.24, 95\% CI = -.38 to -.12$), but not for the child control condition ($B = .06, 95\% CI = -.10 to .21$). These results support H3b by demonstrating that though a child’s weight provides observers with information regarding the consistency with which he consumes unhealthy products, the indirect effect of weight on moral judgments is only significant for mothers who possess control.

General Discussion

The current research extends attribution theory in establishing a model of parental surrogate consumption. Across five experiments, we: 1) define and characterize parental surrogate consumption as a moral consumption behavior, 2) demonstrate that just as moral attributions are formed based on personal consumption information, so too are they formed based on parental surrogate consumption information, and 3) demonstrate that the occurrence and strength of moral attributions is dictated by perceptions of behavioral consistency and control.

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the consumer behavior literature in a number of ways. First, we extend attribution theory beyond judgments made based on the choices consumers make for themselves (e.g., Olson et al. 2016; Williams and Steffel 2014). In this work, we demonstrate that such attributions also can be formed based on the choices consumers make for others (specifically, their children). Second, we direct attention to an overlooked yet highly impactful consumption context: consumption on the behalf of children. Though considerable research has been conducted on child-relevant phenomena such as consumer socialization (e.g., John 1999), the moral implications of the parental surrogate consumption process remain largely unexplored. Third, we answer the call to “broaden the scope” of consumer marketplace morality by introducing parental surrogate consumption as a moral marketplace behavior (Komarova Loureiro et al. 2016).

Limitations and Future Research

Though the current research is the first of its kind, it is not without limitations. Though we define parental surrogate consumption as pertaining to any number of products, herein we only investigate food choices. Future research should investigate non-food products such as screen time, educational products, and medical care, among others. Additionally, though we define parental surrogate consumption as pertaining to the parent-child relationship specifically, there exist many other under-studied surrogate consumption contexts characterized by an unequal distribution of power or control (e.g., consumption on the behalf of the elderly or disabled). Future research should examine these contexts in the interest of expanding our knowledge of surrogate consumption, as well as in the interest of addressing these under-served consumer populations (Pechmann et al. 2011).

REFERENCES


The Implications of a Planned Development on Consumption Practices: A Case Study of an Orang Asli Community in Malaysia

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on one of the Mah Meri’s community, an Orang Asli community (Indigenous) in Peninsula Malaysia. The Orang Asli communities in Malaysia are dispersed in many localities all over Malaysia, and they are non-homogenous. The Mah Meri community in this case study occupied 36,000 acres of land during their ancestral time (Endicott, 2015). The government intends to upgrade the living quality of the community and in place, implemented a planned development on their land (their land was “exchanged” with a local agent who had altered the land into a plantation estate with the hope to provide employment and increased economic conditions of the community. With the intervention, the community has been relocated to places that are different from their original habitat, of which the community needs to adapt to new conditions and environment.

Though the planned development by the government (to reduce poverty eradication and to create a balanced society) have their own merits and benefits, these initiatives could be controversial for the Mah Meri community, whose spaces and natural environment are intruded. The planned development has modified the Mah Meri way of life and brought forth different consumption practices. The aim of this study is to analyze the consumption changes that the Mah Meri have had to adapt to due to the pressure of planned development—from practices of self-sustenance and minimal market transactions to a higher reliance on market transactions and material consumption.

For the Orang Asli, nature is the foundation of their subsistence and culture (Munoz, Mladenoff, Schroeder, and Williams, 2014); whereas for the contemporary world, the meaning of nature is connected mainly to development plans. During inception, the Mah Meri community believe that the local agent (who are tasked to implement the developments) will increase their welfare and economic conditions. But in reality, the development has created a different scenario to the community. The community is in conditions of the extreme marginal situation, which creates a low power defend for them.

The alterations that have been brought by planned development have impacted and changed the lifestyle of the Mah Meri. Initially, the Mah Meri has insisted that they would utilize their ancestral land, but the government believes that a planned development would provide far-reaching benefits on the community. With the land ownership changed to the local agent, the majority of the community has rejected the work opportunities provided on the plantation. With the rise of the plantation estate and settlement (a small township has been established) and the loss of the natural spaces, the self-sustenance concept dwindles. For most of the Mah Meri who suffered the loss of territories, they have to incorporate new ways of working and living.

This study used a phenomenology design to explore the Mah Meri community. The researchers had collected data from the head of the Mah Meri community and 10 villagers in two different interview sessions that lasted for nine hours. The semi-structured probing questions were: Tell us about the life of an indigenous community (before and after the development); how the developmental changes are impacting the community and how the community is adapting to the changes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving comparing transcripts for similarities and differences, and searching for the major structural relationships that were related. The themes were then interpreted and compared against each other, following the stages recommended by Charmaz and Belgrave (2012)—analysis and initial coding, analysis, and interpretation (focused coding), and lastly, the interpretation of the overarching themes were developed from the focused codes.

The themes that were derived from the analyses were materialistic involvement, losing connection to nature, living sources, taboo beliefs, a daily habit, political system, new subsistence and beliefs and future living. These themes were associated with the altered consumption practices that are mainly focusing on these broadly defined consumption themes: from a necessity consumption (basic, self-sustenance, subsistence, productive); and cultural consumption (self-referential, culture, reality) towards a higher order consumption practices of materialistic consumption (functional, aesthetic, reflective, sensuous); playful consumption (performance, pleasure, entertainment, imaginary); intellectualized consumption (cognitive, signs, experience); trend consumption (fashion, statement, design) and contingency consumption (incidental, emergency).

There is a gradual evolution of consumption practices from self-sustenance consumption to a more materialistic-type consumption practices (Spronk, 2014) with the introduction of the plantation estate and small town. The presuppose consumers, still with minimal purchasing power, have contracted the habit of buying and liking practical, functional products and consumer objects which provide them with some form of consumption statement. This consumption pattern expresses a materialistic aspiration and ambition with the change in the social structure (Warde, 2017). There is also a certain reification of the mentality in the formation of consumption practices and how the boundaries of consumption are further upgraded (Wahlen and Laamanen, 2015)—breaking away from the necessity consumption purposes to a higher order consumption practices. The monetarization of small town life becomes more prevalent. It becomes evident that money quantifies qualitative differences, reduces them to the monotony of more or less and the dialectic between the poor and the rich is more visible and differentiated.

In the case of Mah Meri community, they had tried to blend in their lifestyle by adapting to the new conditions. The government’s development plan has caused a trajectory in the lives of the Mah Meri and their connection to their natural spaces and cosmos. The development has opened a new perspective and dimensions in their daily lives. Achieving higher wealth and competitiveness are certainly worthy pursuits in addressing the economic challenges (Hayes, Caldwell, Licona, and Meyer, 2015). However, the condition set forth by the planned development has changed the lifestyle of the Mah Meri community. The findings showed supports that the community’s views about living had been detached from the original view. The community has changed their consumption patterns from a situation of need and necessity to a relatively more aesthetic habits practices when there are elements of development (Alba and Williams, 2013; Pilar and Emontspool, 2015; Ulver and Ostberg (2014).

REFERENCES

Countdown or Countup: Effect of Direction of Time-keeping on Resource Deficiency and Related Downstream Preferences
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Time is a scarce resource (Caroll 2008) and individuals need to accomplish tasks in a fixed time (deadlines, grocery shopping, exercise). Time-keeping can happen in two directions: countups, where time is counted upwards (time-elapsed); or countdowns, where time is counted downwards (time-left). While time-keeping is an important and commonplace phenomenon, there is little research in this domain. This research aims to study the impact of direction of time-keeping on food choices, risk preferences, and helping intentions; and explain the effects through theoretical perspective of resource deficiency. Through four studies, we infer that downward (upward) time-keeping leads to higher (lower) resource deficiency, as manifested in higher (lower) preference for calorie-rich food, more (less) risk-aversion and lower (higher) helping intentions.

Time is considered a resource in many decision making scenarios (Becker 1965; Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dube 1995; Festjens and Janiszewski 2015). This is supported by casual observation about individuals complaining about perpetual time shortage. The key premise of this research is that the direction in which the consumption of time is monitored influences the resource deficiency perception, leading to downstream effects. We argue that downward (upward) time-keeping leads to higher (lower) resource deficiency perception, because decreasing (increasing) sequences are implicitly associated with reducing (increasing) quantities, value or resources (Pelham, Sumarta, and Myaskovsky 1994; Pandealaere, Briers, and Lembregts 2011). There is general association of decreasing sequences with scarcity and reduction (reduction in stock prices, bank balance, calorie consumption etc.). Therefore, a decreasing sequence (especially for resource like time) signals resource reduction more strongly than an increasing sequence. Accordingly, we argue that downward (upward) time-keeping (60,59,…vs…59,60) is more (less) likely to induce resource deficiency perception. Further, such resource deficiency has been found to be associated with higher self-focused behaviors (Levontin, Ein-Gar and Lee 2014), consumption of calorie-rich foods (Briers and Laporte 2013) and risk-aversion (March and Shapira 1992; Haushofer and Fehr 2014). Hence downward (upward) time-keeping should lead to more (less) resource deficiency, as manifested in higher (lower) preference for calorie rich food, more (less) risk-aversion and less (more) willingness to help.

In Study 1, participants (N=95) were randomly assigned to 2(Downward/Upward time-keeping)x2(Evaluation of: Calorie-rich/Calorie-lean food) between-subjects conditions. They worked on a task (crossing e’s) timed either in upward (0-60 seconds) or downward (60-0 seconds) direction. Next, they evaluated either a calorie-rich (chocolate cake) or a calorie-lean (fruit salad) food item on purchase likelihood (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1993). Two way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between time-keeping direction and food category (F(1,89)=7.195, p=0.009). Planned contrasts revealed a significant difference in preference for calorie-rich food between upward and downward time-keeping conditions ($M_{upward-time-keeping}=6.97, M_{downward-time-keeping}=8.02, t(44)=2.65, p=0.005$) but non-significant difference for calorie-lean food item. The results are consistent with the possibility that downward (upward) time-keeping leads to higher (lower) resource deficiency, as manifested in higher (lower) preference for calorie-rich food.

However, an alternative explanation is possible. Literature suggests that downward (upward) counting leads to higher (lower) arousal, resulting in higher (lower) preferences for hedonic foods like chocolate cake (Rook and Gardner 1993; Di Muro and Murray 2012; Edith and Morwitz 2013). Study 2 tests this alternate explanation, by exploring the effect of time-keeping direction on risk preferences. While arousal leads to risk seeking (Horvath, and Zuckerman 1993; Mano 1994), resource deficiency can lead to risk-aversion (March and Shapira 1992; Haushofer and Fehr 2014). Accordingly, if downward time-keeping results in resource deficiency perception (arousal), participants should exhibit risk-aversion (risk seeking behaviour). Participants (N=75) were randomly assigned to: upward/downward time-keeping (similar to Study 1) with risk preference (pre-tested polar scale with 1=50% chance of winning 200 units of local currency, and 11=sure amount of 90 units; lesser value means higher risk preference) as dependent measure. As expected, participants in downward time-keeping had lower preference for risk ($M_{upward-time-keeping}=5.37, M_{downward-time-keeping}=6.88, t(69)=1.86, p=0.032$). These results support our earlier theorization that downward time-keeping leads to higher resource deficiency perception, and effects are not driven by arousal.

While Study 2 rules out the alternate explanation of arousal, it is still possible that the effects of downward time-keeping are due to presence of zero as hard stop. Zero symbolizes completion and exhaustion (of resources). It is possible that resource deficiency perception is induced by presence of zero as the end-point in downward time-keeping, not because of the decreasing sequence. Study 3 investigates this alternate explanation. If the phenomenon is due to presence of zero as hard stop, the effects found in earlier studies should not be observed in downward time-keeping with non-zero ending, but if it is due to decreasing sequence, this effects should be replicated. Participants (N=60) were randomly assigned to: upward (5-64 sec) or downward (64-5 sec) time-keeping (rest of the design was identical to Study 2). It was found that participants in downward time-keeping had lower preference for risk ($M_{upward-time-keeping}=6.68, M_{downward-time-keeping}=8.09, t(46)=1.84, p=0.035$) than in upward time-keeping. The results suggest that it is not the end point (zero or non-zero) but the decreasing or increasing sequence of time-keeping that induces resource deficiency perception and related downstream effects.

Finally, Study 4 tests the mediation of perceived resource deficiency, and attempts to increase the validity of the results with different operationalization of timed task. Participants (N=132) were randomly assigned to: upward/downward time-keeping with task of finding words in a word-block, while the time was ticking on the side of screen. Next, they provided responses for willingness-to-donate money to and willingness-to-help a charitable organization, followed by response to a 5-item perceived resource deficiency scale adapted from Levontin, Ein-gar and Lee (2014). It was found that participants in downward (upward) time-keeping had less (more) helping intentions ($M_{upward-time-keeping}=7.25, M_{downward-time-keeping}=6.73, t(128)=2.27, p=0.012$). Mediation analysis (Hayes 2013; Model 4) supported mediation of perceived resource deficiency between time-keeping direction and willingness to help (95%CI for indirect effect: 0.0158-0.3089). We also measured affect (PANAS; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988), and found no difference in different time-keeping conditions.
ditions. This helps us rule out mood or stress based explanation of results.

This research is among the first to study the direction of time-keeping and we hope that it provides direction for richer understanding of time perception.

REFERENCES
How Incidental Confidence Influences Self-Interested Behaviors? A Double-Edged Sword
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When reading the daily news, one finds examples too numerous to count of politicians, sports stars, business executives, students from top schools, and others finding all sorts of ways to profit by behaving unethically (e.g., Netter 2010). The current research adds to the literature on self-interested behaviors by investigating a hitherto unexplored, yet ubiquitous, determinant—incidental confidence.

People make decisions and take actions based not only on what they like or believe, but also on their confidence in their likes and beliefs. For example, lower confidence can decrease charitable giving (Tsai and McGill 2011), purchases (Greenleaf and Lehmann 1995), price expectations (Mazumdar and Jun 1993; Urbany and Dickson 1991), the amount of money bet on sports games (Tsai, Klayman, and Hastie 2007), and willingness to engage in competition (Camerer and Lofallo 1999).

However, most studies of consequences of confidence have examined how characteristics of a focal event influence confidence in judgments of the same event and subsequent decisions about the event (Yates, 1990). It is curious whether changes in confidence in one domain can influence behaviors in other unrelated domains. We add to this line of work by investigating such transfer effect of incidental confidence on self-interested behaviors. Self-interested behaviors are considered by many researchers a balancing act between wanting to do good and wanting to profit from doing bad (Eisenberg 1991). The present research examines how incidental confidence might tilt the balance and increase selfish or selfless behaviors.

In the absence of a subjective sense of confidence, people often experience a state of psychological aversion that they are motivated to reduce (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982; Payne, Bettman, and Johnson 1992). When it is not possible to restore confidence by improving judgments or ability in the same domain, people can restore confidence by gaining status or increasing rankings in unrelated domains (Coon 1994). For example, an individual who writes poorly might regain his/her confidence by excelling in mathematics. In the context of our study, the desire to compensate for lower confidence may cause people to seek status. The status motives, in turn, can increase self-interested behaviors that generate financial gains or encourage selfless behaviors, depending on whether money or altruism, respectively, is a more prominent source of status.

On the one hand, money is a prominent resource and can serve as an important signal of status (Kemper 1991). Money brings about a state of self-sufficiency, provides a feeling of confidence that problems can be solved and needs can be met (Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2006), and increases the confidence that one can obtain positive outcomes and avoid negative ones (Johnson and Krueger, 2006). We therefore propose that the motive to compensate for lower confidence can trigger self-interested behaviors that generate financial payoffs.

On the other hand, lower incidental confidence can reduce self-interested behaviors when altruism is a stronger signal of status than money (Roberts, 1998). Although status can be achieved by force, we focus on status that is achieved through prestige, freely conferred deference (Henrich and Gil-White 2001). For example, public displays of self-sacrifice for strangers in the group can increase the self-sacrifice’s status and the likelihood of being selected as a leader in that group (Gurven et al. 2000). Similarly, when shopping in front of others, people primed with status-enhancement motives are more likely to purchase costly green products to signal their willingness and ability to bear the cost of prosocial consumption (Griskevicius et al. 2010). However, this preference reverses in a private shopping context (e.g., online shopping) because prosocial consumption would have little signaling value.

In summary, we propose that lower incidental confidence increases (decreases) self-interested behaviors when money (altruism) is the primary signal of status that helps compensating for confidence. We conducted four experiments to test these hypotheses.

Study 1

Method. Study 1 (N_target = 150; N_actual = 121; 36.60% female; age = 34.21; Amazon Mechanical Turk) tested the hypothesis that lower incidental confidence would increase self-interested behaviors relating to money using a one-shot dictator game, a task commonly used to demonstrate self-interested behaviors involving monetary consequences (Camerer 2003). We had a target sample size of 75 participants per cell and managed to recruit 142 participants. Twenty-one participants failed to pass an attention check and were excluded from the analysis, resulting in 121 valid data points.

Study 1 employed a two-level single-factor (incidental confidence: lower vs. higher) between-subjects design. We first manipulated incidental confidence by asking participants to list five events in which they experienced high or low confidence in their judgments or ability, a procedure adapted from existing research (Petty et al., 2002). Pretesting (N = 46) ruled out power and self-esteem as potential confounds.

Next, participants were endowed with $3.00 and allocated the fund with an unknown recipient in a one-shot anonymous dictator game. Participants kept whatever he or she did not offer; the recipient could choose to accept or reject the offer.

Results. As predicted, participants in the lower-confidence condition behaved more selfishly; they kept more money for themselves than participants in the high-confidence condition (M_low-conf = $2.31, SD = .64 vs. M_hi-conf = $2.04, SD = .72; t(119) = −2.19, p = .03; d = .40).

Study 2

Method. Study 2 (N_target = 100; N_actual = 80; 56.10% female; age = 19.52; university students) expanded the research to another self-interested behavior: prosocial consumption that involved a tradeoff between money (cost of product) and altruism.

Participants first completed the confidence manipulation task from Study 1. They then viewed an advertisement and indicated their preference (1 = non-green product, 7 = green product). The advertisement featured a cheaper non-green product and a more-expensive green product. All the other product attributes were identical.

To address the potential issue concerning negative affect, we measured mood and anxiety before and after the choice and controlled for them in the analyses. To rule out the possibility that some form of mood regulation might be involved, we measured anticipated happiness, “to what extent do you think having the product of your choice would make you feel happy (7 = extremely).”

Results. Consistent with Study 1, lower confidence reduced prosocial consumption (M_low-conf = 4.38, SD = 1.31 vs. M_hi-conf = 3.70, SD = .64).
... the savings incurred from purchasing a non-green product was considered more effective in compensating for lower confidence. These results were consistent with the proposed compensatory mechanism. The results further ruled out negative affect, perceived fairness, and effort as alternative explanations because these alternative explanations implied a main effect of confidence regardless of the source of status. Instead, we found that the effect of confidence on product preference was not significant ($F < 1, p = .59$), but the two-way interaction of confidence and source of status was.

**Study 4**

In Study 4, we further tested the compensatory mechanism using the same one-shot dictator game from Study 1 and another procedure to manipulate source of status. Specifically, we varied the strength of group affiliation (Briley and Wyer 2002). Prior research shows that sharing similar experiences can cause people to identify with the reference group (Aronson, Wilson, and Ackert 2010). We therefore predicted that group affiliation would be strengthened when participants thought their recipients took the same study.

As mentioned earlier, the display of altruism could compensate for lower confidence because selfless behaviors could help one gain status. Moreover, prior studies on competitive altruism and costly signaling (Barclay and Willer 2007; Roberts 1998; Van Vugt et al. 2007) suggested that altruism was more likely to help one gain status in a community with strong group affiliation than one with weak group affiliation. Thus, altruism should be perceived as the better means for restoring confidence when group affiliation was strengthened and thus lower confidence should decrease the amount of money that people kept for themselves, causing them to appear more altruistic. Under the condition of weak group affiliation, money would be the better means for restoring confidence. Thus, lower confidence would increase the amount of money people kept for themselves, causing them to appear more selfish.

**Method.** The study ($N_{actual} = 120; N_{target} = 130$ university students) employed a 2 (confidence: lower vs. control) x 2 (source of status: money vs. altruism) between-subjects design. We manipulated incidental confidence as Study 3.

Next, participants proceeded to the one-shot dictator game from Study 1 and encountered the manipulation of source of status. Specifically, we told participants that their recipients either completed the same puzzle study as they did (strong affiliation) or did a different study (weak affiliation). They then divided their three-dollar endowment with their recipients.

**Pretesting** ($N = 42$ students) confirmed that lower confidence increased the motives for obtaining status-enhancing monetary resources and that our confidence manipulation task did not induce negative affect or change perceived fairness of the study. The results showed that participants in the low-confidence condition were more inclined to attribute their desire for the monetary prize to status-enhancement reasons ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.57$) than did participants in the high-confidence condition ($M = 2.39, SD = 1.39; \eta^2 = 0.22, p = .02$). Positive mood, anxiety, and fairness did not differ across conditions ($p > .20$).

**Results and Discussion.** A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction of confidence and source of status only ($F(1, 111) = 9.40, p = .002, \eta^2 = .075$). Planned contrasts showed that when people considered shopping in private, lower confidence reduced prosocial consumption ($M_{low-conf} = 4.81, SD = 1.82$ vs. $M_{hi-conf} = 3.82, SD = 2.14; F(1, 111) = 4.11, p = .04, d = .50$), replicating the results of Study 2. However, the effect reversed when people considered shopping in public ($M_{low-conf} = 4.52, SD = 2.02$ vs. $M_{hi-conf} = 5.69, SD = 1.46; F(1, 111) = 5.30, p = .02, d = .60$).

**Discussion.** The results showed that individuals primed with lower confidence appeared to be more or less prosocial in product choices, depending on whether the ownership of a green product or...
.60). However, the effect reversed when participants thought their recipients had taken the same study (strong affiliation, altruism as the source of status; $M_{hi-conf} = $1.86, $SD = 1.07$ vs. $M_{lo-conf} = $2.37, $SD = .72$; $F(1, 99) = 3.60$, $p = .04$, $d = .56$). These results further supported our proposed compensatory mechanism.

**General Discussion**

It is imperative to better understand the psychology of self-interested behaviors because they are often consequential and incur high cost to the society. Our findings contribute to the confidence literature by documenting a transfer effect of incidental confidence on self-interested behaviors. Our work provides a clearer picture for how confidence influences self-interested behavior. In a series of four experiments, we found that people in a lower confidence state may appear more selfish or selfless depending on the means for restoring confidence. Further, we tested our proposed compensatory mechanism in two studies by manipulating source of status in two different ways—shopping context (Study 3) and group affiliation (Study 4). Finally, data ruled out alternative explanations including affect, fairness, effort, self-efficacy, power, and self-esteem.

This research has important implications for the general area of studies on ethical decision making. For unethical behaviors involving monetary payoffs (e.g., theft, fraud), incidental confidence may produce similar effects to those observed in the current research. In fact, we found in a post-test ($N = 36$ university students) that lower confidence increased theft, a real transgression.

It would be fruitful to further investigate the interplay between confidence and ethical decision making. Other promising avenues for future research include examining how the numerous variables affecting confidence (e.g., processing fluency; Tsai and Thomas 2011) and source of status (e.g., expertise, respect from others; French and Raven, 1959) interact to influence self-interested behaviors.

**REFERENCES**


How Accepting Hierarchy Impacts Information Processing
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current trend of marketers trying desperately to connect with consumers emotionally, so-called “sadvertising” (Fera 2014) makes Aristotle’s (1354/1954) question new again: do people follow their hearts or heads? In this research, we aim to advance understanding on this important consumer decision.

Persuasive information can be put into two categories: affective information (i.e., information appealing to the heart such as feelings and emotions) and cognitive information (i.e., information appealing to the head such as attributes and beliefs of the object) (See, Petty and Fabrigar, 2008). To answer the call for more information processing research focusing on the global consumer and richer classifications of cultural differences (Johar, Maheswaran, and Peracchio, 2006), we identify Power Distance Belief (PDB hereafter) – the extent to which individuals expect and accept hierarchy and inequality in society – as a new factor that impacts the reliance of affective and cognitive information. More specifically, we hypothesize that consumers with low PDB rely more on affective information and prefer affective ads whereas consumers with high PDB rely more on cognitive information and prefer cognitive ads. We further postulate that this PDB effect is mediated by consumption motive with low PDB inducing consummatory motive whereas high PDB inducing instrumental motive. Given the acceptance of one’s position in a hierarchy as the core of PDB, high PDB requires individuals to accommodate to socially conferred positions in a hierarchy. The external regulation of social judgments induces an external perceived locus of causality (Heider, 1958; Botti and McGill, 2011) and promotes instrumental motive for high PDB consumers’ behaviors (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The instrumental motive then induces a preference for products presented with cognitive information (Dhar and Weretneckroh, 2000). In contrast, low PDB releases individuals from external regulation of social judgments and promotes a more internal perceived locus of causality, which consequently induces consummatory motive for consumption behaviors (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The consummatory motive drives a preference for products presented with affective information (Dhar and Weretneckroh, 2000).

We propose external monitoring as a moderator for the PDB effect based on the classic motivation research findings that external regulation undermines consummatory motive and enhances instrumental motive (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan, 1999; Fishbach and Choi, 2012; Maimaran and Fishbach, 2014). More specifically, we predict that salient external monitoring tends to regulate low PDB individuals’ behavior by enhancing their instrumental motive. In contrast, because high PDB individuals’ baseline tendency to regulate their behaviors with external regulation is already high (Friesen et al., 2014), salient external monitoring should have little effect on high PDB individuals’ motive.

Across one content analysis and five experimental studies, we test the central proposition of the impact of PDB on consumers’ preference for affective versus cognitive information.

The pilot study analyzes print ads from US (PDB =40) and Japan (PDB =54), providing ecological support for the hypothesized PDB impact.

Study 1a and 1b demonstrate the main proposition by manipulating both PDB (Zhang et al., 2010, study 1c) and information type (i.e., affective vs. cognitive) across different product categories, thus supporting the internal validity of the main proposition.

Study 2, 3 and 4 provide convergent evidence for the proposed mechanism of consumption motive underlying the PDB effect. The bootstrapping analysis in study 2 supports the proposed mediation of consumption motive statistically. Mediation analysis was tested separately for affective and cognitive ads with Hayes (2013) Model 4 (with IV= PDB, Mediator = consumption motive, DV = Product Evaluation). The confidence intervals of the indirect effect of PDB on product evaluation through consumption motive didn’t include zero for both affective and cognitive ads (affective ad: indirect effect = -.12, Boot SE = .08, CI’s: -.33, -.01; cognitive ad: indirect effect = .12, Boot SE = .07, CI’s: .02, .29), indicating consumption motive mediates the effect of PDB on product evaluation for both the affective and cognitive ads. By manipulating consumption motive, study 3 further confirms the causal path between the proposed mediator and the dependent variable. Study 4 examines a boundary condition of the PDB effect by manipulating external monitoring. As expected, the PDB effect manifests when external monitoring is non-salient and attenuates when external monitoring is salient. With actual and fictitious ads, across different product categories including products and services, and with both student and non-student participants, the converging results demonstrate the robustness of the PDB effect on the persuasiveness of affective and cognitive information and support the proposed process. Moreover, study 1a, 1b, and study 2 repeatedly show that the PDB prime doesn’t impact situational self-construal. Study 2 demonstrates that the PDB effect is not mediated through self-construal. The experimental findings are consistent with recent PDB research (Gao et al., 2016; Lalwani and Forcum, 2016) that PDB and self-construal are orthogonal theoretical constructs and exert impacts on consumer behavior via different mechanisms.

Our research makes several significant contributions. First, our research enriches the growing body of evidence on consumers’ motivated reasoning during information processing by identifying PDB as a new factor that influences consumers’ selective preference for cognitive versus affective information. Second, this research broadens the cross-cultural persuasion research beyond the heavy reliance on the INDCOLL framework (i.e., individualism-collectivism at the cultural level and independent-interdependent self-construal at the individual level). By including PDB, this research greatly enhances the predictive accuracy of cultural orientation on persuasive effectiveness. Third, this research contributes to the PDB literature (Gao, Winterich, and Zhang, 2016; Lalwani and Forcum, 2016; Winterich and Zhang, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010) by uncovering a novel link between PDB and consumers’ processing of affective versus cognitive information and identify the underlying mechanism and a boundary condition.

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Acknowledging versus Ignoring the Identity-Relevance of Rivalry: Why Endorsing Dual Identities Decreases Spectator Aggression and Downplaying Makes Things Worse

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Spectator sports are an emotional intergroup setting in which animosity tends to become overheated and crowds quickly shift from peaceful to violence. Incidents of spectator aggression mainly occur around clashes of rival teams, a problem that is prevalent across different sports and countries. While professional sport teams generally promote rivalries to generate interest and boost attendance, they are afraid to add further fuel to the fire as hostilities tend to escalate quickly between rival spectator groups. Countermeasures include public statements that remind spectators of appropriate and inappropriate behavior at sports venues. A widespread approach is the attempt to play down the importance of rivalry games, with officials stating that the game is “no war” or “only for three points.” Although the attempt to downplay the importance of the game appears intuitively useful, the effects of such statements on spectator aggression are unclear. Drawing on the intergroup conflict literature, this research identifies so-called dual identity statements and argues that such statements are more effective in reducing aggression between rival spectator groups than the managerial practice to downplay. The present research also examines the mechanisms that underlie the effects of dual identity statements and assesses the source of the statement as a potential boundary condition.

A strength of the dual identity approach is that it refers directly to consumers’ identity, which is the basis of the conflict. A public dual identity statement must include two important aspects to decrease the hostility toward the rival spectator group: 1) it acknowledges the rival spectators’ subgroup identities, including their respective distinct features (e.g., team colors, rituals) and 2) it reframes group boundaries by defining and promoting a common superordinate identity, which is accepted and valued by both spectator groups.

The dual identity approach explicitly promotes a superordinate identity that includes the rival spectators. When spectators are encouraged to reconsider previous group boundaries, the context in which social comparisons take place will contain a sense of shared existence and common identity (e.g., similarity in geography, tradition).

Holding both the subgroup identity and the superordinate identity reduces intergroup bias by creating a sense of commonality (Hornsey and Hogg 2000). This should reduce the initial ingroup-favoring bias and makes the opposing group less of a target of aggressiveness:

We also expect the strength of the superordinate identity to mediate the effects of the type of message on spectator aggressiveness.

Three famous rivalries in the German soccer league Bundesliga served as the empirical setting to test our hypotheses in experimental field studies. Study 1 used a pen-and-paper survey among supporters of Dortmund (N = 419; M\text{Age} = 27.32 (±11.23), 66% male), while studies 2 and 3 used online surveys among supporters of Brunswick (N = 949; M\text{Age} = 42 (±14.03), 89.5% male) and Nuremberg (N = 625; M\text{Age} = 33.30 (±13.06), 89% male), respectively. In the dual identity condition, the statement in the press article promoted a superordinate identity by alluding to a shared love of the rival spectator groups for their region and tradition. In the downplay condition, the statement deemphasized the importance of the game.

To capture the dependent variable, we measured both aggressive behavioral tendencies (“I feel the desire to hurt / inflict pain on fans of [rival]”, Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000) and aggressive

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As firms seek to develop green products, they may find that consumers are unwilling to alter their consumption behavior due to a perceived performance reduction. However, past literature has often viewed green products homogenously, whereby a product is either green or non-green. In contrast, we state that a product can feature a green attribute, but that it is not required for the base product to function (termed green attribute optionality), potentially overcoming the negative green product performance stigma.

Building on the innovation locus literature that recognizes the distinction between core and peripheral innovations (e.g., Gatignon, et al. 2002), we extend the concept of peripheral to include optionality. When optional the attribute may enhance a product’s green benefits, but is not required for it to function. Thus, we posit that performance risk is not transferred from the attribute to the base product, enhancing performance evaluations.

In addition, we state that optionality includes two default policies. Based on choice architecture and default literature, a product may possess a green attribute that is default, but may be deactivated (opt-out). Alternatively, the green attribute may be deactivated, allowing the user to activate it when needed (opt-in). As defaults act as a carrier of meaning (Brown and Krishna, 2004), we posit that when the green attribute is the default option (opt-out), performance evaluations will be reduced.

Additionally, we explore the moderating role of cognitive style and the mediating variable of green product typicality. In the former, we posit that holistic thinkers will view product attributes as interconnected, focusing on the degree to which differing attributes are connected and form an entity. In contrast, analytical thinkers may be able to detach the attribute from the product, viewing each attribute as separate (Nisbett, et al., 2001). Based on this, we posit that the impact of green attribute optionality on performance evaluations will be negated when an analytical mindset is activated. In the latter, we predict that an opt-out strategy, whereby the green attribute is default, will lead to an increase in the extent to which the product is viewed as typical of similar green products, thus degrading performance evaluations.

Three experiments were conducted to examine the effect of green attribute optionality on performance evaluations. In Study 1a, we explore both the optional and non-optional conditions. In Study 1b, we introduce the default policies, investigating opt-in, opt-out and non-optional strategies. In Study 2, we examine the moderating variable of cognitive style. Finally, in Study 3, we present the mediating mechanism of green product typicality.

In Study 1a, we performed a one-factor (green attribute optionality: non-optional vs. optional) between subjects’ experiment with 75 respondents. Green attribute optionality was manipulated by presenting respondents with an advertisement for a washing machine along with a heading that outlined the product’s eco-friendly mode. Located at the bottom of the advertisement, a statement indicated that the eco-mode was user-activated. In the non-optional condition, no statement was presented. Finally, we measured performance evaluations. An ANOVA revealed that when the environmental attribute was optional respondents rated the product as higher in performance ability than if it was non-optional (F (1, 73) = 5.796, p < .05).

Study 1b introduced choice architecture and the two default optionality policies. One hundred and twenty-five respondents were recruited to test a one-factor (green attribute optionality: non-optional vs. opt-in policy vs. opt-out policy) between-subjects experiment. All respondents were given a press release for a washing machine, like Study 1a. In the opt-in condition, participants read that the user “can activate the EcoX technology” compared to the opt-out condition that read that users “can deactivate the EcoX technology.” There was no optionality information in the non-optional condition. Next, we measured performance evaluations, green evaluations and environmental consciousness. An ANCOVA, including environmental consciousness as a control variable, revealed a significant main effect (F (1, 121) = 4.364, p < .05), whereby opt-in was significantly higher than both the opt-out and the non-optional. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the non-optional and the opt-out conditions. Finally, no significant effect was found on green evaluations (p = .128).

Study 2 introduces the moderating variable of cognitive style. We recruited 245 respondents to examine a 3 x 2 between-subjects experiment. The manipulations for optionality were the same as in Study 1b, while cognitive style was manipulated by asking respondents to write about a meaningful event that took place in their lives alone (analytical) or with friends and/or family (holistic). A significant main effect was found (F (1, 238) = 9.887, p < .05), whereby opt-in enhanced performance evaluations. In addition, a significant interaction was found (F (1, 238) = 4.363, p < .05), where the analytical condition negated the effect of choice architecture. Finally, there was no main effect for green evaluations (p = .764).

Finally, in Study 3, we tested a 2 x 2 between subjects’ experiment with 149 respondents to examine the mediating variable of green product typicality, which was measured along with performance and green evaluations and environmental consciousness. In this study, the non-optional condition was removed. Cognitive style was manipulated as in Study 2, while optionality was manipulated via an advertisement for a kettle, in which the green was described similarity like Study 2. A two-way ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction between green attribute optionality policy and cognitive style (F (1, 144) = 4.690, p < .05). Furthermore, a significant direct effect was found (F (1, 144) = 5.014, p < .05). Finally using Process Model 7 (Preacher and Hayes, 2008), we found a significant moderated mediation with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (CI = -.3895 to -.0029).

Taken together, we show that optionality enhances performance evaluations. Specifically, the optionality policy of opt-in. In addition, this perceived performance enhancement does not come at the expense of perceived greenness. Additionally, we find support for the moderating variable of cognitive style and the mediating role of green product typicality. Our results provide both theoretical implications, as well as practical contributions for green product development.

Optionally Green: The Role of Green Attribute Optionality in Influencing Performance Evaluations

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REFERENCES
The Role of Women, Sexualization and Objectification in LGBTQ Advertising

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In advertising, the sexualization of women is taking place in the LGBTQ target market segment. Whilst LGBTQ advertisements continue to target males using humor as the dominant appeal, for women, the most dominant appeal is sexual. When the main character in the advertisement is portrayed in terms of LGBTQ connotation, a positive and negative connotation is fairly evenly distributed for male characters, however; for female characters, the positive LGBTQ connotation is dominant. If the main character is female, she is more likely to be portrayed as a protagonist.

Marketers and organizations alike, balance a fine line between appealing to both LGBTQ and mainstream clients without ostracizing one or the other, specifically their mainstream clients, as they are a larger portion of the population (Flounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2016). Heterosexuals desire lesbian imagery over gay male imagery, therefore, advertisers targeting the gay market will use lesbian imagery because not only does it reach homosexual consumers, but it also reduces the chance of heterosexuals identifying the advertisement as LGBTQ (Hootens et al., 2009). The heterosexual audience has a positive attitude towards lesbian ads, and these results are compounded when the level of intimacy displayed in the advertisements are amplified (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). It is significant to note that lesbians are often depicted as highly sexualized in mainstream media (Flounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2016).

This exploratory research examines the portrayal of women when either the main character and/or voiceover (gender, sexuality, antagonist, protagonist) in LGBTQ TV advertisements. In the first instance, the aim was to determine the dominant appeals (emotional, fear, humor, rational, sexual) and LGBTQ connotations (positive, negative) that are associated with women in advertisements to the LGBTQ community.

The diversity of the LGBTQ community has meant there isn’t one, single ‘LGBTQ’ identity. Oakenfull (2007) found clear distinctions between gay and lesbian consumers and argued that marketers had to use lesbian imagery and not just gay imagery in advertisements to be effective in the two communities. Um (2014) found heterosexual consumers to respond less favorably to gay-themed advertising, including a differential in heterosexual males more negatively evaluating gay-themed advertising and the brand advertised than did heterosexual females. Oakenfull & Greenlee (2004) cautioned marketers to consider both the gender of their target gay or lesbian audience and the gender of the heterosexual audience likely to view the advertising when creating their advertisements.

Hypothesis 1: Women are featured less prominently in LGBTQ TV advertising campaigns

Using sex as a method of selling supports the influence of silencing a woman’s appeal by exhibiting women in an objectified manner for male pleasure and utilization. This common portrayal accentuates physical attractiveness, prominent displays of the body, and sexual mannerisms of women. Then, marketers used more explicit messages, though this was imagery that was unique and recognizable to the LGBTQ community, these methods were used to mask the underlying LGBTQ message from the non-LGBQ population (Peñaloza, 1996).

Hypothesis 2: For female characters in LGBTQ TV advertising campaigns, the most dominant appeal is sexual

The study examined the characteristics of LGBTQ TV advertisements (n = 300) that ranged from the years 1952 to 2016. It examined the portrayal of the main character and voiceover (gender, sexuality, antagonist, protagonist), dominant appeal (emotional, fear, humor, rational, sexual) and LGBTQ connotations (positive, negative).

When comparing the Western world (US, EU, Oceania) and less developed countries (Asia, Africa, South America), LGBTQ advertisements continue to target males ($\chi^2 = 4.74, df = 1, p < .05$). The broader focus remains on the Western world (135 ads, 46.7% male; 50 ads, 17.3% female), whilst similar in less developed countries (63 ads, 21.8% male; 41 ads, 14.2% female), the gap between genders is much smaller.

If the main character is male, then the voiceover is traditionally male as well (87%), hence it is congruent ($\chi^2 = 18.59, df = 1, p < .001$). For females, the voiceover gender is more evenly distributed (54.3% male, 45.7% female). However only very few cases occur where advertisements have a female voiceover (33 ads, 19.9%). In terms of how the main character of the advertisement is portrayed with regards to LGBTQ connotation, a positive and negative connotation is fairly evenly distributed for male characters, however, for female characters (36 ads, 62.1%), the positive LGBTQ connotation is dominant ($\chi^2 = 12.92, df = 2, p < .01$). Lastly, if the main character is female (46 ads, 79.3%), she is more likely to be portrayed as a protagonist ($\chi^2 = 6.32, df = 1, p < .05$).

The sexualization of women also takes place in the LGBTQ community ($\chi^2 = 12.94, df = 4, p < .01$). For male characters, the most dominant appeal is humor (80 ads, 36.5%), followed by sexual appeals (56 ads, 25.6%). For female characters, the most dominant appeal is sexual (24 ads, 41.4%), with all other appeals evenly distributed. If the character is male (175 ads, 63.2%), the target audience is more likely to be straight rather than identify as LGBTQ ($\chi^2 = 7.57, df = 1, p < .01$).

The dominant appeals in LGBTQ advertisements are humor, eroticism, and leisure. Reichert & Ramirez (2000) discovered four predominant traits of sexual advertisements including: physical appearance of models, behavior or movement, intimacy between models, and contextual features. Gill (2009) argues that the proliferation of sexually explicit imagery within both contemporary and LGBTQ advertising indicates that sexualization is neither a homogenous or singular process. Individuals within the LGBTQ community are sexualized in specific ways and in a visual culture, lesbian, bisexual, and queer women are often easily recognizable ‘figures’ in LGBTQ advertising, yet sexualization doesn’t necessarily maneuver outside of class, gender and/or radicalization due to the fact that it remains overwhelmingly ageist and heteronormative (Evans, Riley & Shankar, 2010). In this respect, findings from the current research are possibly the first evidence that women are underrepresented in LGBTQ advertising and female characters are often portrayed with a positive attitude.
LGBTQ connotation. The perspectives of the sexualization of women in LGBTQ advertising highlights two key areas for consideration: (1) the portrayal of women compromising the relationship they have with their own and other women’s bodies, and (2) LGBTQ advertising sensibility, underwrites the discussion around the sexualization of women, including the prospects of empowering female sexuality rather than demonizing it (Randazzo, Farmer & Lamb, 2015).

**REFERENCES**


Personal Control and Perceived Product Efficacy
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
A growing stream of research examines how individuals cope with the common experience of reduced personal control (e.g., Chen, Lee, and Yap 2016; Cutright 2012; Cutright and Samper 2014). Compensatory control theory (CCT; Kay and Eibach 2013) proposes that behavior following a loss of control is driven by two basic motivations: bolstering a sense of agency, and affirming structured and predictable relationships in the world. In turn, four strategies serve these two motivations (Landau, Kay, and Whitson 2015). The present research builds on the two strategies for bolstering agency, which are (1) affirming beliefs about personal agency or ability, and (2) affiliating with external entities that can act on the self’s behalf. Specifically, we build on prior work showing that control-deprived consumers evaluate products more favorably when those products have characteristics fitting the motivation to affirm personal agency (i.e., “strategy 1”). For example, products requiring effort are evaluated more favorably because using them is empowering (Cutright and Samper 2014), and utilitarian products are evaluated more favorably because they are associated with problem-solving (Chen et al. 2014).

Extant research has not examined the possibility that products can serve as external sources of control (i.e., “strategy 2”); research in this strategy focuses on cultural sources of control (e.g., religion and governments; Kay and Eibach 2013). However, because “efficacious products” (e.g., performance-enhancers, detergents, and pharmaceuticals) can be seen as external entities that act on a user’s behalf in order to bring about a desired outcome (e.g., successful performance, a clean home, and relief from ailments, respectively), it may be possible for control-deprived consumers to rely on such products as external sources of control.

In line with CCT, we thus propose that consumers experiencing low control seek external aids that can help them achieve their goals and reaffirm their ability to bring about desired outcomes. As efficacious products can help users reach desired outcomes, we hypothesize that low (vs. high) personal control increases perceived product efficacy. Moreover, as this is driven by control-deprived consumers’ motivation to use the product in order to reach a desired outcome, this effect combines “strategy 2” and “strategy 1” (Landau et al. 2015) in the sense that reduced control leads consumers to give more credit to the external source (by perceiving greater efficacy) because this helps consumers accomplish desired outcomes through their own actions. This implies that the effect of personal control on perceived product efficacy should be moderated by the personal relevance of a product for achieving desired outcomes.

We tested these predictions in two studies and find support for our proposed process. Study 1 provides initial evidence through a 2 (personal control: low vs. high) x 2 (self-affirmation: neutral vs. affirmation) between-subjects design in which 98 Mturk respondents participated. As self-affirmation reduces the need to compensate for low personal control (Whitson and Galinsky 2008), we hypothesized that participants feeling low (vs. high) personal control would perceive a product as more effective, but this effect would be attenuated by an opportunity to self-affirm. To test this, participants were led to believe that they would utilize a performance-enhancing treatment (listening to music by Mozart) to assist their performance on a task, and we measured participants’ expectations for the effectiveness of the music at improving performance. As expected, we found a significant 2-way interaction ($p<.05$) such that low (vs. high) personal control increased perceived efficacy in the neutral affirmation condition ($F<1$) but not the self-affirmation condition ($F<1$).

Study 2 built on these findings by manipulating the personal relevance of the product under consideration, such that half the participants believed the product under consideration would be used for an upcoming task, whereas the other half merely reported efficacy perceptions without expecting to consume the product or perform the task. Thus, 209 undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (personal control: low vs. high) x 2 (expectation of consumption and performance: absent vs. present) between-subjects design. Participants in the expectations-present condition were led to believe that they would consume an energy drink (“Neuro SONIC”) before completing a performance task, whereas those in the expectations-absent condition were simply informed that we were interested in their perception of the energy drink. We measured perceptions of product efficacy, as well as participants’ motivation to derive efficacy from the product in order to accomplish desired outcomes. We hypothesized that low (vs. high) personal control would increase perceived efficacy in the expectations-present condition only, and that motivation to derive product efficacy would mediate this effect.

Results confirmed our predictions. We found significant two-way interactions on both efficacy perceptions ($p<.05$) and motivation ($p<.05$), such that participants in the expectations-present condition perceived significantly greater efficacy, and were also significantly more motivated to derive efficacy, under low vs. high personal control ($p<.05$). Mediation analysis (Hayes 2013; Model 8) demonstrated that motivation mediated the effect of personal control on efficacy perceptions (95% CIs for both the two-way interaction and simple effects did not cross zero, and the direct effect of the two-way interaction on efficacy became nonsignificant when accounting for motivation).

Our research contributes to the personal control and product efficacy literatures. First, extant marketing research on products as sources of personal control has studied only evaluations of products, showing that products possessing characteristics associated with regaining agency are evaluated more favorably (Chen et al. 2016; Cutright and Samper 2014). We build on this work by showing that perceptions, not only evaluations, of products are impacted by personal control. Moreover, this effect is due to a combination of the strategies used to regain control: Control-deprived consumers perceive greater product efficacy because they are motivated to utilize external sources of control (“strategy 2”) in order to accomplish personally-relevant desired outcomes (“strategy 1”; Landau et al. 2015). In contrast, previous research has only shown that product evaluations are impacted by personal control due to “strategy 1.” Finally, we also contribute to the product efficacy literature by showing that personal control—a factor relating to consumers, rather than the product—impacts perceptions of product efficacy.

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How Process Explanations Impact Assessments of Predictions of Uncertain Events

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When making predictions, experts can choose how much explanation to provide—either very little or a lot—about the process used to make inferences. While literature on consumer research suggests that providing more information generally improves evaluations (Calder, Insko, and Yandell 1974; Chaiken 1980; Stiff 1986), we show that consumers report preferences for more explanation in choices among predictions, but, in the context of single probability prediction evaluations, we demonstrate that providing process information can lower evaluations. This occurs because explanation sometimes leads to the inference that the prediction-making process is less complicated, and, therefore, the expert’s analysis was not as in-depth, affecting inferences about both the prediction (accuracy) and the expert (trustworthiness). Thus, consumers may believe a prediction to be less accurate and trust the expert less when she offers more explanation.

We draw from the area of inference-making to develop our theory. This research stream suggests that when little information is present (e.g., other than the overall prediction), consumers use prior knowledge to make inferences. Because an expert provided this estimate, they infer that the process of arriving at the overall prediction was complicated. However, when an explanation is presented, consumers can generate new information from this content. Hence, when a brief explanation is presented, it is likely to lack details and look superficial, leading to inferences that the expert did not do an in-depth analysis, which should be less likely to occur with detailed explanations.

In study 1, participants (N=121) from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk participated in this study for monetary compensation. Participants were asked to choose one of two analysts’ predictions to share with others.

They were told that the analysts had made predictions about job prospects in various fields, one of which related to finding administrative jobs in the hoteling and tourism (HT) industry. Participants chose between an expert who did not provide any explanation (Analyst A) and one who did (Analyst B). In the brief explanation condition, Analyst B said he looked at two factors, the chances of finding an administrative job and finding a job in the HT industry, and combined them. In the detailed explanation condition, Analyst B described four steps used to arrive at the same two factors and in the fifth step combined them.

Participants overwhelmingly (87%) chose the analyst that provided an explanation, regardless of the level of detail provided by the explanation. Study 2 investigates what happens in a single evaluation context.

In study 2, participants (N=243) from Amazon’s MTurk participated in this study for monetary compensation. The scenario was similar to that of study 1. In the choice conditions, participants chose between experts. In the evaluation conditions, participants evaluated a prediction with either no, a brief, or a detailed explanation.

Participants in the choice conditions then chose an analyst’s prediction they would use, followed by evaluations of their relative trust in the analysts and the accuracy of the predictions. Instead of choosing an analyst, participants in the evaluation conditions completed measures of trust and accuracy. The choice results mirrored those of study 1. In the evaluation conditions, separate ANOVAs with trust and accuracy as dependent variables revealed a significant effect of level of detail on accuracy and a marginal effect on trust. The patterns of the effects were similar. For both accuracy and trust, compared to providing no explanation, providing a brief explanation reduced accuracy and trust, whereas providing a detailed one did not.

Thus, providing a brief explanation resulted in reduced accuracy and trust. Study 3 replicates these effects in a stock price context, demonstrates the effect on two more downstream variables, and examines the mediating role of perceived depth of analysis.

In study 3, participants (N=259) from Amazon’s MTurk participated in this study for monetary compensation. The analyst had predicted the chance that a particular company’s stock price would increase by $10 per share in the next year.

Two of the choice conditions were the same as previous studies. We also added a third choice condition in which Analyst A offered a brief explanation, and Analyst B offered a detailed explanation. In the evaluation conditions, participants evaluated a prediction with either no, a brief, or a detailed explanation.

Participants in the choice conditions then chose an analyst’s prediction they would use. Then they stated which analyst they would be more likely to recommend and responded to the same trust and accuracy measures as in study 2, plus a new depth of analysis item. In the evaluation conditions, except for choosing the analyst, participants rated the same questions, adapted accordingly, and also indicated how likely they would be to purchase the stock.

The results mirrored those of the previous studies—there was a preference for explanation in choice, but brief explanations were punished in evaluations. Depth of analysis mediated the effect of brief explanation on the four evaluation variables.

Across three studies, using job and stock prediction contexts, we demonstrate the role that explanation plays in affecting choices and evaluations. We provide insights into the role of information in information products, with the counterintuitive finding that experts may be better off leaving their predictions unexplained.

REFERENCES


Extreme Marketplace Exclusion in Subsistence Marketplaces: A Study in a Refugee Settlement in Nakivale, Uganda

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Largely excluded from marketing literature are individuals in subsistence marketplaces. This term refers to an approach that begins at the micro-level and is bottom-up, encompassing a range of low-income consumers and entrepreneurs (Viswanathan 2013). Indeed, these marketplaces are often characterized by exclusion. But marketplace exclusion reaches even starker levels in subsistence contexts borne out of violence, flight, and abject conditions for survival, such as in refugee settlements. Understanding such exclusion is especially critical as a refugee’s average length of stay in exile is approximately 20 years (Betts et al. 2014).

We aim to understand how refugees are excluded from the marketplace. These experiences are so drastic as to stretch extant conceptualizations to cover extreme marketplace exclusion. The fundamental contribution of this paper is therefore to delineate extreme marketplace exclusion via refugee contexts. We explain such exclusion by integrating current research and providing empirical support for our conceptualization. Our synthesis of extant literature identifies elements of extreme marketplace exclusion and their interplay. We then describe our methods and present findings about the nature of extreme marketplace exclusion in our research context. We conclude with a discussion covering theoretical and practical implications.

Elements of Extreme Marketplace Exclusion

Literature on exclusion has primarily focused on ‘social’ exclusion (Sen 2000), examining it as a vicious cycle with multiple, reciprocal, cause-and-effect elements which intensify exclusion (Levitas et al. 2007). Marketplace exclusion may have varying degrees, with ‘deep exclusion’ characterizing exclusion across multiple dimensions (Levitas et al. 2007). Similar to deep exclusion, extreme marketplace exclusion involves multiple forces. Unlike deep exclusion, however, we study exclusion in a subsistence marketplace context intensified by violence, psychological stress, economic strain, and social instability. Specific to a refugee context, our research focuses on how elements relate to form extreme marketplace exclusion, locating it vis-a-vis deep exclusion. Importantly, the marketplace does not only involve economic transactions, but melds social, cultural, political, and economic realities (Granovetter 1990). Research remains to offer a theoretical model to account for these multiple elements of marketplace exclusion. We now identify and delineate four elements of this type of marketplace exclusion: geographic isolation, social ostracism, abject poverty and loss of marketplace literacy.

Studies in rural subsistence marketplaces (e.g., China: Wang and Tian 2013) in refugee settlements (Rose 2001) show geographic isolation as a key contributor to marketplace exclusion. Many settlements lack sufficient infrastructure, geographically isolated from public facilities including schools, hospitals, and markets (De Montclos and Kagwanj 2000). Even more drastic, refugees’ geographic isolation may stem from legal restrictions enforcing segregation from the local community (Taylor 1996).

Refugees in their host countries often face the most severe form of social ostracism, as they bear the stigma of fleeing their home country, and are perceived as unwelcome exploiters of the host country’s resources (Sartorius et al. 2013). Refugees must endure the turmoil of resettlement, separation from family and culture (Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee 2007), and exclusion due to cultural/language barriers (Taylor and Stanovic 2004). Refugees are therefore often unable to understand cultural aspects of marketplaces (Taylor and Stanovic 2014).

Abject poverty, arising from loss of income and assets, and displacement, make markets inaccessible and products unaffordable, severely inhibiting consumption capability (Deaton 1972). Poverty is rampant among refugees who have lost their livelihoods in their home countries (Sartorius et al. 2013). Refugees mostly survive on government or international aid with limited alternative means to their survival. The social and psychological conditions refugees face make it extremely difficult for them to start a new livelihood. This is coupled with the lack of economic opportunities made available to them until their legal status is settled, which can take many years (White 2007).

Loss of marketplace literacy due to relocation makes it difficult to engage in marketplace interactions (Viswanathan et al. 2009). Loss of such literacy can lead to poor consumption decisions, sometimes making individuals vulnerable to deception at the hands of sellers. Whereas in most subsistence contexts, consumers cope with the lack of basic literacy by developing marketplace literacy via interpersonal relations (Viswanathan et al. 2009), refugees face a new, unfamiliar and extremely harsh setting, where social relations are strained (Werker 2007). The loss of marketplace literacy is accentuated for those with low literacy and income, whose functional literacy in the marketplace domain is socially embedded. For those with higher literacy, there is still an effect due to situational loss of marketplace literacy (Viswanathan et al. 2010). The psychological stresses of leaving home countries and resettlement may further impair refugees’ cognition, characteristic of low-income consumers living in scarcity conditions (Shah, Mullainathan, and Shafir 2012). Given the link between marketplace literacy and self-confidence (Viswanathan et al. 2009), we consider emotions and cognitions. Emotions are drastic in refugee contexts, even more so than other subsistence marketplaces and a violent past (and sometimes present) combined with deep fear of the future fixes individuals in the immediate present, accentuating cognitive elements.

Context and Methods

Context. We conducted our study in Nakivale, a refugee settlement in rural Uganda housing over 84,000 refugees managed by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). Upon arrival, refugees are given construction materials to build shelter. Residences are allocated based on ethnicity due to potential conflict among refugees of different nations. Between the time of arrival and time spent building, they sleep under a large tent. The UNHCR distributes a limited supply of food each month, but it is gradually reduced after six months with the expectation that refugees find work. Employment is often difficult to obtain, however. Mbarrara, a mid-sized town approximately 45 minutes away from Nakivale by car, offers employment opportunities, but no formal transportation to the town exists. We also note these refugees vary widely in their educational achievements, different from traditional subsistence marketplaces where low literacy and low income often co-occurs (Hodes and Goldberg 2002). Images depicting the severe circumstances of the marketplace can be found in the Appendix.

Methods. We employed qualitative techniques including observations, depth interviews, and marketplace-learning interventions. Pertaining to field observations, two immersions took place in person (one in June 2015 and again in July 2016), and virtually from January
to May, 2015 via Skype meetings. The UNHCR and non-profit organi-
zations on the ground facilitated access. In particular, we worked 
with a group of entrepreneurial refugees mentored and developed 
into a team by one of our partner organizations. These refugees acted 
as both participants and facilitators. We observed settlement facili-
ties, various local marketplaces, the land, and a nearby town. In-
terviews ranged from 30 to over 90 minutes and tape recorded for 
coding purposes. The first part of each semi-structured interview was 
phenomenological (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989), and the 
second transitioned into a structured discussion of informants’ mar-
tplace experiences. Refugee participants and translators received 
3,000 shillings for participation, the equivalent to one U.S. dollar.

Findings

We examine four elements of extreme marketplace exclusion: 
abject poverty (economic), geographic isolation (physical), social 
ostracism (social), and loss of marketplace literacy (cognitive-emotional). Importantly, extreme marketplace exclusion impacts both consumption and employment.

Elements of Extreme Marketplace Exclusion

Abject poverty. In terms of economic conditions, refugees face 
abject poverty. Finding food of some quality and clean water is 
challenging. Kevin, a middle-aged refugee employed at an UNHCR 
facility, states that the “Sometimes [the] water has color, sometimes 
it smells, and good water doesn’t have all those elements.” Lacking 
even basic necessities leaves refugees with few spending options. A 
young man describes his experience of abject poverty and how he 
spends in the local marketplace.

David: We have nowhere to borrow from.
Interviewer: Do you buy things in the market?
David: … not much. We get soap and cooking oil.

Our informant explains how he has no accessible credit institu-
tions to borrow funds. Due to his scarce financial resources, he buys 
only necessities for the immediate present. Unlike traditional sub-
sistence contexts, any earned/inherited family assets are completely 
lost upon migration.

Geographic Isolation. Although refugees can travel to towns 
nearby, the lack of resources and mobility barriers are often insur-
mountable. Daniel, a 24-year old man who fled Congo and lived in 
the settlement since 2010, explains how this particular element im-
pacts his work as an artist.

Daniel:…as an artist, I want to buy [tools] I [need]…. [but] 
there’s no place they sell [the art materials]…. once I sent some-
one to buy [the materials in Kampala]…. [but] he doesn’t know 
the quality that I need…. he may just buy what [sellers] tell him.

Due to long distances and high transportation costs, he cannot 
even travel to the preferred marketplace in Kampala (260 kilometers 
away) to purchase materials either. He also cannot send others to buy 
on his behalf since they do not know how to purchase quality materi-
als at reasonable prices.

Social Ostracism. Another element in understanding extreme 
marketplace exclusion is social ostracism. Social ostracism is asso-
ciated with extreme marketplace exclusion as consumers, entrepre-
neurs, and employees. Individuals who fled their country can endure 
a much more extreme form of ostracism than those in traditional 
subsistence contexts. This element of extreme marketplace exclu-
sion arises from cultural factors, and interestingly, are not confined 
to national/ethnic differences. Many respondents explain how sellers 
from the home country or of different origin often exclude refugees 
via discrimination. One informant illustrates this:

Daniel: … clearly I can speak English and those sellers can 
speak English, but when in Mbarara, they know I’m not Ugandan – and they can change and instead they don’t speak Eng-
lish…. just to make a complication. Here, I used a different lan-
guage, I do not negotiate and sometimes they increase price.

Daniel explains how social ostracism manifests in the market-
place. The exclusion he experiences cannot be neatly categorized into 
being indirectly ignored or directly rejected (Lee and Shrum 2012). 
The shopkeepers clearly acknowledge him (he is not ignored), and 
they do not explicitly refuse his shopping ability (he is not directly 
rejected). Instead, shopkeepers acknowledge him in an attempt to co-
erce a ‘penalty price’ for not being Ugandan. Consequently, the sell-
ers exclude the refugees from fully participating in the marketplace.

Loss of Marketplace Literacy. Another element leading to 
marketplace exclusion is the loss of marketplace literacy, 
deﬁned as encompassing skills, self-conﬁdence, and awareness of 
rights and capturing know-why, know-how, and know-what as con-
sumers and entrepreneurs (Viswanathan et al. 2009). We note that 
refugees may range in income and literacy levels in their home coun-
try, with the refugee status drastically lowering the former while 
maintaining the latter for relatively higher incomes and education 
levels. We focus on cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Concrete thinking in the here and now arising from difficulty 
with abstractions is likely to be accentuated with geographic iso-
lation, abject poverty, and social ostracism. Similarly, pictographic 
thinking and a rudimentary dependence on senses is also particu-
larized in the immediate. Veronica, a 20-year-old woman, illustrates her 
present-state orientation explaining, “I don’t have savings…” and 
when discussing leisure activities, “Never I have the time to think of 
that.” Mary, a 43-year-old woman, explains how difﬁcult it is to fall 
asleep. She elaborates, “I don’t get sleep thinking how will I push the 
next day and make living for my children.” Cognitively, fathoming a 
future is difficult for these women. Emotionally, Veronica describes 
how she cannot engage in leisure activities. Ray even explains how 
he attempts to actively repress his emotions just to function saying 
“Such [bad feelings] you cannot permit. You know we are human 
beings, yeah? When something is very bad, you [will] have some 
emotions, but maybe [they] can cause you trauma…” The cognitive 
predilections of being in the here and now arising from low literacy 
and the immediacy of basic needs are further accentuated by severe 
emotional trauma.

Interplay between Elements of Extreme Marketplace 
Exclusion

The economic, geographic, social and cognitive-emotional 
realms of life described all amplify and reinforce extreme market-
place exclusion. In a context of abject poverty, geographic isolation 
precludes opportunities outside the settlement, narrowing refugees 
to the abject poverty there and extreme marketplace exclusion. So-
cial ostracism combines with geographic isolation to reinforce such 
exclusion. And the individual level cognitive and emotional aspects 
associated with marketplace literacy further narrow individuals to 
the immediate present, and reinforce the inability to overcome ex-
reme marketplace exclusion. In a sense, these are the levers of mar-
tplace exclusion. We offer Figure 1 as a theoretical framework to 
illustrate how these elements relate to each other.
Discussion

Our findings offer contributions to the areas of exclusion, marketplace exclusion, and subsistence contexts. First, we study marketplace exclusion in a refugee context where these subsistence consumers face the most severe challenges, demonstrating extreme marketplace exclusion as a novel phenomenon. Second, we describe how this phenomenon operates in this context, delineating its elements informed by prior research. Third, we illustrate how the elements of extreme marketplace exclusion are interlinked and reinforce each other, creating a vicious cycle of exclusion from the marketplace. In doing so, we integrate aspects of exclusion from previous studies in refugee contexts and explain it from the marketplace perspective.

Implications

Theoretically, we study a qualitatively different level of marketplace exclusion and the elements associated with it. Specifically, abject poverty, geographic isolation, social ostracism, and loss of marketplace literacy are elements leading to extreme marketplace exclusion. Even compared with studies of deep exclusion, the severe nature of extreme marketplace exclusion is distinctly unique. Despite potentially having valued skills and education, refugees are often excluded from the marketplace’s workforce due to the elements we outline. Our work also highlights how individual cognitive and emotional aspects associated with marketplace literacy accentuate marketplace exclusion. These individual elements combine with elements rooted in the external environment to lead to the complex phenomenon of extreme marketplace exclusion. Future research should focus on extreme marketplace exclusion in a variety of contexts to better understand how the elements of such exclusion manifest in the harshest of human conditions, ranging from areas devastated by natural disasters to war. Moreover, future work should examine the coping strategies consumers employ in such drastic exclusion circumstances. For example, even when faced with extreme exclusion, our participants still navigate their realities to pursue and attain belongingness and acceptance. The specific tactics these consumers leverage to achieve belonging experiences have yet to be closely examined but hold important implications for studying consumers’ agency and resilience.

In term of practical implications, we highlight the importance of providing refugees with capacity-building learning experiences that address skills, self-confidence, and awareness of rights. In this regard, the role of marketplace literacy education is particularly relevant to extreme marketplace exclusion. Rather than focus on access or financial resources, marketplace literacy education is related to capacity-building that begins with a deeper understanding of the marketplace (know-why) as a basis for know-how and know-what. Moreover, such education also addresses issues of self-confidence and identity, critically important in these settings. In conclusion, our study of what we term extreme marketplace exclusion provides a foundation to study consumers and employees in the harshest of subsistence contexts, with important theoretical and practical implications.

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Large Steps Toward Small Donations: Reputational Benefits of Nominal Corporate Generosity

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

One prevalent and increasingly lucrative prosocial practice is for brands to donate some portion of sales or profits to designated charitable causes via “cause marketing” campaigns (e.g., Krishna, 2011; Small & Cryder, 2016). Descriptions of such campaigns often highlight two attributes: the percent-of-profits (or percent-of-revenues) from each purchase that the brand will donate, and the maximum amount of money the brand will donate. For example, a 2014 campaign by Chipotle locations in Minnesota pledged that “50% of [its] proceeds up to $35,000 will benefit Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.”

We examine how these numerical attributes of cause marketing campaigns influence perceptions of brands’ generosity. We anticipate that the percent-of-proceeds donated from each purchase will be a stronger predictor of generosity perceptions than maximum donations. Our rationale builds on research by Hsee and colleagues on attribute evaluability. Hsee and Zhang (2010) proposed that sensitivity to variation in the value of an attribute (i.e., the attribute’s evaluability) is partly a function of knowledge of the attribute’s distribution (e.g., its range or mean). In the cause marketing context, consumers are unlikely to recall typical values of the percent-of-proceeds and maximum donation attributes. Nevertheless, consumers are likely to be more sensitive to variation in the percent-of-proceeds attribute than variation in maximum donations, because the former attribute has a clear upper bound (100%), but the latter attribute does not.

A novel implication of our reasoning is that cause marketing campaigns may allow brands to appear highly generous without actually being highly generous (by donating a high percent-of-proceeds and a low maximum donation). In what follows, we investigate that implication and more broadly examine whether the percent-of-proceeds attribute is in fact more predictive of generosity perceptions than the maximum donation attribute. We explore whether this effect holds over a range of percentages. To test our evaluability account, we manipulate the number of different cause marketing campaigns participants encounter (and thus the evaluability of the campaigns’ numerical attributes). In addition, we attempt to rule out several alternative accounts (e.g., that the percent-of-proceeds attribute is more influential because it is the first attribute presented or because it is especially memorable).

Experiment 1

Our first experiment aimed to document initial evidence of consumers’ greater sensitivity to the percent-of-proceeds attribute of cause marketing campaigns than to the maximum donation attribute. We also investigated whether this effect is an artifact of the order in which the two attributes are presented. Typically, the percent-of-proceeds attribute appears first (e.g., when companies pledge to donate X% up to $Y). If people are indeed more sensitive to variation in the percent-of-proceeds attribute, it could be because they simply paid greater attention to the first numerical information they encountered. We therefore counterbalanced which attribute appeared first.

Participants and Procedure

We recruited 600 adults (49% female; mean age: 33) via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in exchange for a small payment. We told participants that we were interested in how consumers form impressions of companies based on limited information. In all conditions, we described a clothing retailer with annual profits of $10 million that had conducted a donation campaign over the past year to help raise money for local charities.

We either described the retailer as donating 1% of its profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $26,000 (Lower%/Higher$ condition) or donating 30% of its profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $25,000 (Higher%/Lower$ condition). Because we noted that the retailer has annual profits of $10 million, it should be clear to participants that the retailer would ultimately donate the maximum amount. We emphasized this fact by noting that the retailer “ultimately donated that maximum amount.” Thus, normatively, the retailer should be viewed as (slightly) more generous when they donate $26,000 than when they donate $25,000.

We also counterbalanced the order in which the campaign attributes were presented. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to view the percent-of-proceeds attribute first (e.g., in the Lower%/Higher$ condition, the retailer pledged to “donate 1% of its profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $26,000”). The other half of participants were randomly assigned to view the maximum donation attribute first (e.g., in the Lower%/Higher$ condition, the retailer “pledged to donate up to a maximum amount of $26,000, based on 1% of its profits from each purchase”).

We then asked participants to indicate on 0-10 scales (where 0=not at all and 10=very) the extent to which they thought the retailer would be generous. Next, we asked participants two open-ended recall questions: “What percentage of profits from each purchase did the company donate?” and “What was the total amount of money the company ultimately donated?” Finally, participants provided demographic information.

Results and Discussion

We first conducted a factorial ANOVA treating generosity ratings as the dependent variable and numerical campaign attributes (Lower%/Higher$ vs. Higher%/Lower$) and attribute presentation order as independent variables. We found a significant main effect of numerical campaign attributes ($F(1,596) = 12.30, p < .001$). As predicted, perceived generosity was significantly greater when the company donated a higher percentage of profits and lower maximum amount than when the company donated a lower percentage of profits and higher maximum amount ($M = 6.69$, $SD = 2.57$ vs. $M = 5.93$, $SD = 2.73$; $t(598) = 3.49, p < .001, d = .29$). We observed this difference despite the fact that participants were assured that the retailers would ultimately donate their maximum amount. Normatively, we would expect the Lower%/Higher$ campaign to be viewed at least as generous as the Higher%/Lower$ campaign, if not slightly more generous.

There was no main effect of attribute presentation order ($F(1,596) = 12, p = .73$), and no interaction between numerical campaign attributes and attribute presentation order ($F(1,596) = 1.65, p = .20$). This suggests that greater sensitivity to the percent-of-proceeds attribute is not an artifact of attribute presentation order.

We also examined whether the percent-of-proceeds attribute was more memorable than the maximum donation attribute. Participants were not significantly more likely to correctly recall the percent-of-proceeds donated from each purchase than the maximum payment. We told participants that we were interested in how con-
donation amount (90% vs. 87%; p = .10, Fisher’s Exact Test). If we focus only on the 486 participants who correctly recalled both attributes, perceived generosity was still greater when the retailer donated a higher percentage of profits and lower maximum amount than when the retailer donated a lower percentage of profits and higher maximum amount (M = 6.76, SD = 2.57 vs. M = 6.04, SD = 2.71; t(484) = 3.05, p < .01, d = .27).

Experiment 1 provides initial evidence that, when presented with a description of a cause marketing campaign, consumers’ perceptions of the brand’s generosity are more sensitive to the percent-of-proceeds to be donated than to the maximum donation amount. As a result, in this experiment, the brand was viewed as significantly less generous when it was objectively more generous. We found that this was not driven by the order in which the two key attributes were described or differences in the memorability of the two attributes.

Experiment 2
Our explanation for the greater perceived generosity of the Higher%/Lower$ brand is that the percent-of-proceeds attribute is easier to evaluate and thus more influential. However, it is possible that the effect may have been driven by reactions to the 1% figure in particular, rather than the greater evaluability of (all) percentages. That is, the 1% of profits donated in the Lower%/Higher$ condition may have appeared to be an insultingly trivial gesture. Experiment 2 therefore examined whether generosity perceptions are more sensitive to the percent-of-proceeds attribute even when that percentage is not trivially low.

Participants and Procedure
We recruited 600 adults (52% female; mean age: 34) via MTurk to participate in exchange for a small payment. People who had already participated in Experiment 1 were not eligible to participate in this experiment. As in Experiment 1, we told participants that we were interested in how consumers form impressions of companies based on limited information. In all conditions, we described a clothing retailer with annual profits of $10 million that plans to conduct a donation campaign during the current fiscal year to help raise money for local charities.

We randomly assigned participants to one of four conditions. Half of participants were randomly assigned to either a Lower%/Higher$ condition (retailer donates 1% of profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $26,000) or a Higher%/Lower$ condition (retailer donates 25% of profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $25,000). We increased these percentages by 20% for the other half of participants. That is, the other half of participants were randomly assigned to a Lower%/+20 condition (retailer donates 21% of profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $26,000) or a Higher%/+20 condition (retailer donates 45% of profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $25,000).

Next, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they viewed the retailer as generous on a 0-10 scale, where 0 = not at all generous and 10 = very generous. We also asked participants to recall the percent-of-proceeds and maximum donation values from the campaign they had read about (two open-ended questions). As in Experiment 1, participants were not significantly more likely to correctly recall the percent-of-proceeds value than the maximum donation value (90% vs. 87%; p = .11, Fisher’s Exact Test). Finally, participants provided demographic information.

Results and Discussion
Consistent with Experiment 1, generosity ratings were significantly greater in the Higher%/Lower$ condition than in Lower%/Higher$ condition (M = 6.53, SD = 2.65 vs. M = 5.13, SD = 2.57; t(302) = 4.66, p < .001, d = .54). Generosity ratings were also significantly greater in the Higher%/+20 condition than in the Lower%/+20 condition (M = 6.72, SD = 2.70 vs. M = 5.97, SD = 2.70; t(294) = 2.37, p = .019, d = .28).

These patterns suggest our results were not merely driven by aversive reactions to a somewhat trivial donation of 1% of profits. Instead, these results suggest that generosity perceptions are generally more sensitive to the percent-of-proceeds attribute, even when that percentage is not trivially low.

Experiment 3
One implication of our conceptual framework is that providing information about other cause marketing campaigns should increase the evaluability of both the percent-of-proceeds attribute and the maximum donation attribute; it should especially increase the evaluability of the maximum donation attribute (cf. Hsee, 1996). When maximum donations become more evaluable, the objectively less generous campaign should no longer be viewed as more generous.

Participants and Procedure
We recruited 297 adults (49% female, mean age: 33) via MTurk to participate in exchange for a small payment. People who had already participated in prior experiments were not eligible to participate in this experiment. As in previous experiments, we told participants that we were interested in how consumers form impressions of companies based on limited information. In all conditions, we described a clothing retailer with annual profits of $10 million that plans to conduct a donation campaign during the current fiscal year to help raise money for local charities.

We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions. In two separate evaluation conditions, participants either learned of a cause marketing campaign that donates 1% of its profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $40,000 (SE:Lower%/Higher$) or donates 20% of its profits from each purchase, up to a maximum amount of $10,000 (SE:Higher%/Lower$). In a third joint evaluation condition (JE), participants viewed both campaigns. The two campaigns were presented as the efforts of two different clothing retailers.

In all three conditions, participants read that all donations would be made at the end of the fiscal year. We included this information to rule out the potential interpretation that the Higher%/Lower$ campaign could reach its target amount faster and donate faster than the Lower%/Higher$ campaign. In other words, we did not want the assumed speed of donation to be confounded with the numerical attributes of the campaign.

We then asked participants to indicate the extent to which they found the company to be generous on a 0-10 scale, where 0 = not at all generous and 10 = very generous. Next, we asked participants to recall the percent-of-proceeds and maximum donation values from the donation campaign(s) they had read about (open-ended questions). As before, the percent-of-proceeds and maximum donation attributes were about equally likely to be recalled accurately, in both the separate evaluation and joint evaluation conditions (ps > .45).

Results and Discussion
Figure 1 displays perceived generosity by condition. Consistent with previous experiments, in the separate evaluation conditions, perceived generosity was significantly greater in the SE:Higher%/Lower$ condition than in the SE:Lower%/Higher$ condition (M = 5.99, SD = 2.82 vs. M = 5.21, SD = 2.59; t(197) = 2.03, p = .044, d = .29). However, in the joint evaluation condition, where participants could see both campaigns, the numerical attributes of the cam-
paign did not significantly influence perceived generosity (Higher%/Lower$ M = 6.17, SD = 2.38 vs. M = 6.44, SD = 2.52, t(97) = 1.02, p = .31). Using the analysis outlined in Hsee (1996, footnote 2), we found that this was a significant Separate Evaluation/Joint Evaluation interaction (t(296) = 2.29, p = .023). Thus, as predicted, we found the percent-of-proceeds attribute was more influential only when a single cause marketing campaign was evaluated in isolation (which is likely how consumers encounter cause marketing campaigns in the real world – i.e., one at a time). The percent-of-proceeds attribute is less influential when consumers have some comparison information that makes the maximum donation attribute more evaluable.

General Discussion

A recent report by Engage for Good (a popular cause marketing forum; Chansky, 2015) expressed concern that, in cause marketing campaigns, a “generous-sounding percentage” of proceeds can be “misleading” (cf. Olsen, Pracejus, & Brown, 2003) and “naturally, what matters, is the actual amount donated.” Our work suggests that this concern is well-placed. In three experiments, we found that brands were viewed as significantly more generous when donating a higher percent-of-proceeds and a lower maximum amount than when donating a lower percent-of-proceeds and a higher maximum amount. This occurred despite descriptions that made it clear that the brand would always make its maximum donation. The effect is not driven by the greater memorability of percentages (Experiment 1) and is not limited to cases in which the percent donated is obviously low (Experiment 2). The presence of comparative context especially helps people evaluate the maximum donation attribute and reduces the undue influence of the percent-of-proceeds attribute (Experiment 3).

Several open questions remain. The extent to which brands and retailers intentionally capitalize on the effect documented here is unclear. Some companies have likely benefitted from the effect documented here, whether intentionally or not (e.g., Chipotle’s offer to donate 50% of sales, up to $35,000). In addition, in many cause marketing campaigns, there will be some uncertainty about whether the brand will reach its maximum donation amount. It would be interesting to examine how consumers form expectations about how close brands will get to their maximum. Questions like these seem worthy of future research.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Health has become a global challenge, with health problems increasing across the world. Worldwide obesity rate, for example, has doubled (NCD-RisC 2016). Flu viruses have become stronger over the years (Savage 2008). Many health problems can be avoided through simple preventive actions. Exercising, for example, could help prevent obesity. Thus, policy makers are focused on understanding how preventive behaviors could be encouraged. A significant part of this focus is on making preventive health messages more effective (Gerend & Shepherd, 2007). Preventive messages commonly inform the readers of different health risks associated with a health condition. An anti-obesity message, for example, might inform readers of obesity-related health risks, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Current research explores whether the number of health risks a preventive message communicates could affect preventive decision making. To illustrate, an anti-obesity message could communicate both high blood pressure and diabetes as obesity-related risks or it could communicate one of these two equally threatening and likely health risks. Which of these two strategies would be more effective in encouraging preventive behavior adoption?

Normatively speaking, a reader should find the health condition more dangerous and thus be more likely to adopt the target preventive action when the message communicates multiple equally threatening and likely health risks (e.g., high blood pressure and diabetes), compared with when it communicates only one of the two risks. Consistently, to encourage adoption of preventive behaviors, policy makers and health experts typically communicate all major risks associated with the health condition.

In contrast to the normative view, we propose that presenting multiple equally threatening health risks is a less effective strategy than presenting only one of these risks—a proposition drawn upon research on imagery. Research in this domain suggests that one’s capacity to simulate mental images is limited (Baddley & Andrade, 2000). Drawing upon this research on imagery, current research is the first to argue that due to mental imagery capacity limitations, health risks should be less vividly imagined when one has to mentally simulate multiple health risks simultaneously, compared with when one has to simulate only one health risk.

Vivid imagery has been shown to be an important determinant of people’s behaviors, such that a message that evokes more vivid mental images is likely to be more effective in persuading behaviors (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Drawing upon a synthesis of these findings, we propose that a health message communicating multiple equally threatening health risks would lead to less vivid imagery and, therefore, be less effective in encouraging adoption of preventive behaviors, compared with a message that communicates only one of the two health risks.

Research suggests that when people use affective processing, vivid imagery is an important determinant of their behaviors (Keller & McGill, 1994). However, when people use a deliberative mode of processing, they tend to rely on logical, calculation-based reactions (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004). Therefore, we further propose that when a deliberative mindset is induced, people should be more sensitive to the number of health risks. Thus, when people are in a deliberative mindset, communicating multiple health risks in the message should be a more effective in encouraging adoption of preventive behaviors than presenting only one of these risks.

Four experiments, including two field experiments, examined these hypotheses. To provide a strong test of our hypotheses, we compare effectiveness of a message communicating two equally threatening risks with that of a message communicating only one of these two risks. Studies were conducted in Turkey and all health messages were communicated in Turkish. There were no exclusions unless otherwise reported.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1, conducted at a health center, examined the primary hypothesis in the context of obesity—people exposed to two obesity-related risks are less likely to engage in the target preventive action (exercise) and less likely to join an obesity prevention program as opposed to those exposed to only one of the two risks.

During regular check-ups, as is required, the general physician handed over pamphlets describing obesity-related risks to incoming patients (N=240) with a BMI of 25 or over. These pamphlets included affect-laden pictures of a family on the front page and a description of obesity risk(s) on the second page. One version of the pamphlet communicated two risks of obesity—high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes—pretested to be equally threatening and likely (see figure-1 for the sample message). The visual position of the two risks was counterbalanced across participants in all experiments. The other version communicated one of these two risks—high blood pressure or diabetes. The message encouraged patients to walk regularly to prevent obesity, an advice typically given by the physician. Patients were also asked by the physician to join the obesity prevention program run by the health ministry at the center.

One week after each patient’s visit, a nurse contacted the patient and measured the frequency as well as the duration of the patient’s walks during the week. This nurse also recorded whether the patient had joined the obesity clinic—this information was checked against the clinic records.

Results and Discussion

We used a two-part model to examine the impact of the number of risks on walking duration. The two-part model analysis revealed that those in the two-risk condition were less likely to walk (30.83%) than those in the one-risk condition (47.5%; z=-2.63, p=.009, B=-7.07, CI [-1.23, -1.80]). Amongst those who walked, those in the two-risks condition (M=33.15 minutes; SD: 17.13) walked less than those in the one-risk condition (M=44.49 minutes; SD: 27.55; z=-2.24; p=.009; CI [-21.275, -1.396]; d=-.49).

Finally, a binary logistic regression revealed that patients who were less likely to join the obesity program when informed of two risks (33.3%) compared with when exposed to one risk (10.83%; Wald $\chi^2$ = 4.599; p=.032; B= -1.259, Odds Ratio=.284; CI [.090, .897]).

This study provides support for our primary hypothesis: Communicating multiple health risks in a preventive message reduced the likelihood of engaging in preventive behaviors than presenting only one of the multiple risks.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2, conducted at a pharmaceutical store, sought to replicate the effect found in previous study in the context of flu.

Customers (N=432) at the store were informed of flu-related risks using posters, which were posted at the entrance and at the check-out counter. These posters communicated either two equal-
ly threatening and likely flu-related risks—muscle aches and sore throat, or only one of these two risks—and encouraged customers to keep their hands clean to prevent flu. Additionally, the posters referred to Flu as **Grip-Nezle**, an affective term used by lay people to refer to flu in Turkey. In order to examine whether presenting two risks would be as good as sharing a generic health message, in a third condition, a neutral poster communicating a generic health message was posted. Hand-sanitizing wipes packets were available for sale at the check-out counter; sale of wipes was our main dependent variable.

**Results and Discussion**

We ran a logistic regression with two contrasts. The first contrast showed that there was no difference in the likelihood to purchase hand-sanitizing wipes between those exposed to two-risks (61.6%) and those exposed to neutral health message (55.9%; p=.837). The second contrast showed that in line with the findings of the previous study, those exposed to a single risk were more likely to buy the hand-sanitizing wipes (13.29%) than those exposed to two risks or neutral message (5.88%; Wald \( \chi^2 = 6.541; p=.011; B=908; Odds Ratio=2.478; CI[1.236, 4.968] \)). Findings of Experiment 2 replicated the effect found in the previous study in the context of flu.

Given the previous experiments employed affective pictures or affective terms, we assume that participants relied on their affective reactions while making the decision. However, the previous experiments do not explicitly test this assumption. The next two experiments take care of this limitation.

**Experiment 3**

Experiment 3 examines the moderating role of affective versus deliberative processing. We argue that when cued to rely on affective reactions, we should replicate the effect found in previous studies. When cued to rely on more deliberative reactions, the effect should be reversed such that participants should be more likely to engage in the preventive action when exposed to multiple risks as opposed to only one risk.

Participants (N=273) first engaged in a task, which cued them to focus on either their affective or deliberative reactions. Drawing upon past research (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004), those in the affective-cue condition responded to questions that required them to examine and report their feelings toward different affect-laden words. Participants in the deliberative-cue condition solved simple math problems. Subsequently, participants viewed one of the two versions of an anti-obesity message encouraging them to eat health. As in Experiments 1 and 3, one version communicated two risks of obesity—high blood pressure and diabetes. The other versions communicated only one of these two risks—high blood pressure or diabetes. Participants then chose a free snack between an apple and a brownie.

A logistic regression revealed a significant type of cue by number of risks interaction (z=4.4134; p<.0001; CI[1.3490, 3.5043]). In the affective-cue condition, participants were less likely to choose an apple when informed of two risks (28.89%), compared with when informed of only one of the two risks (60%; z=-3.3236; p=.0009; B=-1.3063; CI[-2.0766, -5.3539]; Odds Ratio=2.708). In contrast, in the deliberative-cue condition, participants were more likely to choose an apple when informed of two risks (68.89%), compared with when informed of only one risk (41.93%; z=2.9137; p=.0036; B=1.1204; CI[1.3667, 1.874]; Odds Ratio=3.066).

Providing support for the underlying conceptualization, the current study shows that increasing the number of health risks communicated in the message can negatively (positively) impact the likelihood of adopting the target preventive action when one is cued to rely on affective (deliberative) reactions.

**Experiment 4**

In the last experiment, we further examined our underlying conceptualization by examining the mediating role of vivid imagery. We predicted that when relying on affective reactions, preventive message should evoke less vivid images when it communicates two health risks as opposed to one of the two health risks. However, when participants are cued to focus on their deliberative reactions, number of health risks should not impact vivid imagery. Moreover, we expected vivid imagery to mediate the impact of number of health risks on preventive action in the affective-cue condition, but not in the deliberative-cue condition.

To examine the aforementioned hypotheses, during flu season, participants (N=146) were exposed to a preventive message encouraging them to keep their hands clean to prevent flu. This message communicated either two equally threatening and likely flu-related risks—muscle aches and sore throat, or only one of these two risks.

Drawing upon research (Sinaceur, Heath & Cole 2005), which shows that using an affective (vs. scientific) frame to refer to a disease can induce affective (vs. deliberative) processing mode, we varied the frame (affective versus scientific) used to refer to flu. One set of messages used in the current study referred to flu as **Grip-Nezle**, an affective term used for flu by laypeople in Turkey (affective frame). Another set of messages (scientific-frame) referred to flu as **A Tipi Enflüanza** (Influenza-Type A), a term used by doctors in Turkey. These terms were chosen based on a pretest.

After evaluating the message, participants chose a gift between two items—a pen and a hand-sanitizing wipes pack, which served as the dependent measure. Participants then responded to a final survey, which asked them to evaluate the viewed message on six nine-point scale items (Keller & Block 1997) measuring how vividly they could imagine the message. Four participants did not take this survey, leaving us with a sample of 142 participants for these measures.

**Results and Discussion**

A logistic regression revealed a significant interaction between the frame-type and number of risks (z=3.9615; p=.0001; CI[1.4346, 4.2442]). In the affective-frame condition, fewer participants chose hand-sanitizing wipes when informed of two risks (36.11%) compared with when informed of one of the two risks (75.75%; z = -3.2008; p=.0014; B=-1.171; CI[-1.194, -1.148]; Odds Ratio=1.808).

In the scientific-frame condition, participants were more likely to choose hand-sanitizing wipes when two flu-related risks were communicated (58%) than when one risk was communicated (30%; z = 2.363; p=.018; B=1.129; CI[1.93, 2.066] Exp(B)=3.092).

An ANOVA conducted on the vivid imagery measure revealed a significant interaction between number of risks and frame-type factors (F(1,138)=29.63, p < .0001). In the affective-frame condition, images elicited by the message were less vivid when the message communicated two risks (M=3.143; SD=1.379) than when it communicated one risk (M=4.887; SD=1.163; F(1,138)=35.15, p < .001; CI[2.326, -1.163]; d=1.36). No such corresponding difference was found in the scientific-frame condition (F(1,138)=2.62, p>.1; CI[-0.989, 984]).

We further conducted a moderated mediation using PROCESS model 7 (Hayes 2013), which revealed that vivid imagery mediated the impact of number of risks on likelihood to choose hand-sanitizing wet wipes in the affective-frame condition (B=1.3034, CI=[-2.1902, -0.6375]) but not in the scientific-frame condition (B=0.3310, CI=[0.0398, 0.8615]).

This experiment provides further support for our conceptualization related to vivid imagery. In the affective frame condition, presenting two health risks elicited weaker images of the message, which mediated the impact of the number of risks on the likelihood of adopting preventive behavior. However, there was no such cor-
responding difference in vivid imagery in the scientific frame condition.

General Discussion
Current research is the first to reveal that people’s likelihood of adopting a preventive action non-normatively decreases when the health message communicates two health risks associated with the condition as opposed to one of the risks. Our findings further show that when nudged to rely on deliberative reactions, people focus on the number of health risks, thus increasing the likelihood to adopt a preventive action when the message communicates multiple risks as opposed to only one risk.

These findings make important theoretical contributions—First, our findings contribute to the affective decision making research. This is the first research to show that in the context of negative outcomes, people are less likely to adopt a preventive action when it can potentially prevent multiple equally threatening health risks as opposed to a single health risk. Second, our findings contribute to research on vivid imagery. Our findings show that increasing the number of negative outcomes communicated in a message can reduce the vividness with which one can imagine the risks, but only when relying on affective reactions, not when one is cued to rely on deliberative reactions.

We believe our findings have important policy making implications. Public health campaigns often tend to communicate all primary risks associated with a health condition. Given a significant amount of decision making is driven by people’s intuitive, affective reactions (Larrick 1993), current research findings suggest that communicating multiple risks is a strategy which can unintentionally reduce the likelihood of adopting preventive behaviors. Our findings further suggest that for experts, who tend to rely on deliberative cues, presenting multiple health risks is likely to be a more effective strategy than presenting a single health risk. In essence, our findings present insights into how health communication could be made more effective depending on the audience.

REFERENCES
When Numbers Make You Feel: The Impact of Round versus Precise Numbers on Preventive Health Behavior

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Prevention is better than cure—this adage has shaped the US healthcare spending, with about 75% of healthcare expenditure spent on preventive care (Beagle 2013). Many health problems can be avoided through simple preventive actions. Policy makers are, therefore, keen on understanding how preventive health messages can be made more persuasive (Gerend and Shepherd 2007). To make messages more persuasive, preventive health messages often incorporate numerical cues, such as the probability with which a preventive action can reduce a health risk (Reyna et al. 2009). The current research makes a novel prediction that incorporating numerical cues that appear round (e.g., 15.00%) versus precise (e.g., 15.23%) can increase people’s likelihood of adopting preventive behaviors.

Research shows that round numbers are more easily processed than precise numbers, in part because people are more frequently exposed to round numbers in everyday language (Kettle and Häubl 2009; Wadhwa and Zhang 2015). Moreover, research on affective decision-making suggests that exposure to fluent stimuli is likely to engage the default affective system, leading people to rely on their intuitive, affective reactions while making decisions (Alter et al. 2007). Drawing upon this logic, we propose that exposure to round numbers should lead people to rely on their more intuitive, affective reactions, compared with exposure to precise numbers.

Following from the idea that stronger affective reactions can motivate preventive health behaviors (Loewenstein et al. 2001; Sinaurceur, Heath, and Cole 2005), we further hypothesize that when numerical cues in preventive messages are presented in a round (e.g., 15.00%) versus a precise (e.g., 15.23%) format, people are more likely to adopt preventive behaviors. We examine this hypothesis across five studies.

Study 1A

Study 1A examines our primary hypothesis—round numerical cues should increase preventive behavioral intention, compared to precise numerical cues.

This study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, 200 US participants were presented with a health message featuring an obese person. The only difference between conditions being the probability numbers (see below):

- **30.00%** (vs. **31.57%**) of the US population suffer from obesity today.
- **15.00%** (vs. **15.29%**) of deaths in the US were caused by obesity.

Eat Healthy!

Twenty-four hours after being exposed to the message, participants were emailed the second survey. 156 participants (48.1% women, M$_{age}$ =31.7) completed the second survey. In this second survey, participants first reported the number of unhealthy, as well as healthy food items they had consumed in the past 24 hours. Participants then listed all the items with approximate portion size they had consumed in the last 24 hours. Our main dependent variable was the amount of unhealthy eating participants had engaged in 24 hours, subsequent to the preventive health message exposure.

Results and Discussion

We first computed the change in the number of glasses of water participants drank by subtracting the number of glasses of water they

Drink More Water!

Twenty-four hours later, participants were emailed the second survey. Out of the 260 participants recruited in the first stage, 184 (45.1% women, M$_{age}$ = 33.9) completed the second survey. In this second survey, participants reported the number of glasses of water and the number of times they had consumed water in the last 24 hours on a 21-point scale (ranging from 1 to 20+; 20+ was coded as 21). Finally, participants indicated how many glasses of water and how many times they generally consume water in one day (excluding the last 24 hours) using the same 21-point scale items (ranging from 1 to 20+). Our main dependent variable was the change in water consumption from the regular water consumption, in 24-hours subsequent to message exposure.

Results and Discussion

We measured the amount of unhealthy eating in the following two ways. First, a linear regression analysis conducted on the number of unhealthy food items participants reported ate revealed that those exposed to round numbers consumed significantly less unhealthy food items (M=1.90) than those exposed to precise numbers (M=2.65; t(154) = -2.91, p=.004). While, these participants also reported consuming a slightly higher number of healthy food items (M=4.65), than those in the precise number condition (M=4.08), this difference was not significant (t(154)=1.30, p=.20).

Second, to further examine if round versus precise numbers impacted unhealthy eating behaviors, we recruited 202 independent coders from the same population to rate the food items. Each coder was assigned to rate the food items listed by 15 to 16 participants on an 8-point scale (1=very unhealthy, 8=very healthy). We computed an unhealthy eating score (reverse-coded) by averaging the ratings of all the food items each participant had consumed. An ANOVA conducted on this score revealed that those exposed to round numbers had a lower unhealthy eating score (M=3.97) than those exposed to precise numbers (M=4.28, t(154)=-2.29, p=.03). Study 1A shows that presenting obesity-related risks using round versus precise numbers in a health message reduced participants’ unhealthy food consumption.

Study 1B

This study, conducted in two stages, sought to conceptually replicate study 1A in the context of water consumption. In the first stage, 260 US participants were presented with a health message featuring a man and a woman suffering from flu. The only difference between conditions being the probability numbers:

- **20.00%** (vs. **20.37%**) of the US population suffered from flu last year.

The number of people being hospitalized due to flu complication has increased by **40.00%** (vs. **40.21%**).

Drinking water frequently can reduce the risk of getting flu.
usually consumed from the number of glasses they drank subsequent to being exposed to the preventive message. A linear regression revealed that those exposed to round numbers showed a significant increase in the number of glasses of water they drank ($M=0.55$), compared with those exposed to precise numbers ($M=-0.01$; $t(182)=2.23$, $p=0.03$). Further, one-sample $t$ tests confirmed that the increase (0.55) in number of glasses of water consumed in the round number condition was significantly different from zero ($p=0.002$), whereas the change (-0.01) in the precise number condition was not ($p=0.95$).

Similarly, a linear regression revealed that participants in the round number condition showed a significant increase in the number of times they drank water ($M=0.68$) than those in the precise number condition ($M=-0.29$; $t(182)=2.73$, $p=0.007$). One-sample $t$ test confirmed that the increase (0.68) of number of times water was consumed in the round number condition was significantly different from zero ($p=0.007$), whereas the change (-0.29) in the precise number condition was not ($p=0.26$). Study 1B provides further support for the round number hypothesis in the context of flu.

**Study 2**

We measured actual behavior in the current study. Participants were exposed to a dental hygiene message, which encouraged them to floss to avoid gum diseases. We measured the time participants spent on flossing. 202 participants recruited from a major university in Singapore (62.4% women, $M_{age}=21.3$) were randomly assigned to either the round or the precise number condition. Participants were shown a message related to gum diseases. This message, which incorpo rated a gender-neutral picture of an individual suffering from bleeding gum, indicated gum disease related risk estimates as either precise or round numbers:

60.00% (vs. 60.41%) of people in Singapore suffer from gum diseases leading to swollen and painful gums.

Gum diseases could increase the risk of losing teeth by 40.00% (vs. 40.37%).

**Flossing Helps Prevent Gum Diseases.**

Subsequently, participants were given an opportunity to floss their teeth. Participants were asked to pick up envelopes carrying individual floss sticks, a paper glass and napkins. Unbeknownst to the participants, we recorded the time participants took for flossing. Another ten participants did not pick up the flossing materials and missed this part of the task. Data from these 12 participants could not be used, leaving us with a total sample of 190 participants.

**Results and Discussion**

Due to the large variation in the flossing time measure, we first examined the data for outliers. Based on the three SD above or below the mean criterion (McClelland 2000), we identified and removed an outlier (3.5 SD above the mean) prior to further analyses. A linear regression revealed that participants spent longer time flossing their teeth after reading the gum disease message with round numbers ($M=58.38$ seconds), compared with those who read the gum disease message with precise numbers ($M=46.58$ seconds; $t(187)=2.02$, $p=0.045$). This study replicated the round number effect using actual behavioral measures.

**Study 3**

The degree to which affective reactions can drive behaviors depends on whether people trust their feelings would direct them in the right direction (Lee, Amir, and Ariely 2009). Affective reactions are more likely to drive behaviors when people believe trusting their affective reactions would help them make the right decision. In this study, therefore, we explicitly manipulated participants’ situational trust in their feelings. We predicted that when participants’ trust in feelings is high, exposure to round numbers in a preventive message should increase the likelihood to engage in preventive behaviors. In contrast, when participants’ trust in feelings is low, impact of round numbers on preventive behavioral intentions should get attenuated.

The study followed a 2 (number: round vs. precise) × 2 (trust in feelings: high vs. low) between-subjects design. 345 US participants (47.0% women, $M_{age}=34.8$) completed the study. One participant reported being below age 18 and thus data from this participant was removed prior to any analyses. Another participant who took approximately 24 hours to complete the experiment was removed from further analyses. A post-hoc check revealed that including these two participants’ data do not change our results.

Participants were informed that the first part of the experiment sought to understand how people use feelings when making a decision. In this task, participants were asked to recall and describe either a situation in which they followed their feelings and it was the right thing to do (high-trust in feelings) or a situation in which they followed their feelings and it was the wrong thing to do (low-trust in feelings; adapted from Lee et al. 2009). Fifty-seven participants did not indicate any experience, and thus data from these participants could not be used for analyses. Additionally, five other participants responded to the question in non-English languages and thus were removed prior to any analyses. Removing these participants left us with a total sample of 286 participants.

Subsequently, in a purportedly unrelated study, participants read the following scenario (adapted from Sinaceur et al. 2005) with the only difference across conditions being the probability number:

You have just finished eating your dinner. While watching the evening news on TV, you find out that eating chicken may expose you to the human variant of Bird Flu. According to the recent report, one type of vaccination was recently launched in the US, which can reduce the chance of getting this disease by 60.00% (vs. 60.41%).

Participants were asked to indicate their intention to take the vaccination on a nine-point scale (1=very unlikely, 9=very likely).

**Results and Discussion**

An ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction between the number exposure and the trust in feelings ($F(1, 282)=5.44$, $p=0.02$; see Figure 1) factors. Follow up analyses reveal that in the high-trust in feelings condition, participants indicated a higher intention to take the vaccination when the numerical cues presented in the message were round ($M=5.56$), than when those cues were precise ($M=4.68$; $t(282)=2.15$, $p=0.03$). However, in the low-trust in feelings condition, this effect of number on the intention to take the vaccination was eliminated ($M_{round}=4.90$ vs. $M_{precise}=5.38$; $t(282)=-1.33$, $p=0.25$).

**Study 4**

This study examines the reliance on affective reactions conceptualization in two ways: 1) We argue that if round versus precise numbers lead people to focus on their affective reactions, then incidental exposure to round versus precise numbers in an unrelated task could also subsequently increase people’s affective behavioral intention and 2) we examine the role of reliance on affective reactions in moderating this effect.

In this study, 483 US participants (60.2% women, $M_{age}=35.3$) were randomly assigned to one of the two number conditions. Participants engaged in eight consecutive trials of a number sorting task, which asked them to sort four different images of numbers in an as-
cending order of the physical size of the images. Participants sorted either round number images (e.g., 10,00, 60.00) or precise number images (e.g., 10,32, 63.74). The time participants spent on the task did not differ between conditions ($F<1$, $p=.38$). A pretest with 42 participants indicated that the image sorting task was perceived to be equally difficult ($M_{\text{round}}=2.17$ vs. $M_{\text{precise}}=1.85$, $F<1$, $p=.37$) and effortful ($M_{\text{round}}=4.32$ vs. $M_{\text{precise}}=4.43$, $F<1$, $p=.84$) between the two conditions.

Subsequently, participants read a purportedly unrelated preventive message featuring a picture of an obese person, accompanied by the following message: “Increasing numbers of the US adults suffer from obesity today. Eat Healthy!”

Participants then indicated their likelihood of avoiding eating anything unhealthy for dinner that day (1=very unlikely, 9=very likely). We then measured negative affective reactions by asking participants two questions: “How worried do you feel about becoming overweight or obese?” (1=not at all worried, 9=very worried) and “How concerned do you feel about becoming overweight or obese?” (1=not at all concerned, 9=very concerned; $\alpha=.96$).

Results and Discussion

First, a linear regression analysis revealed that participants were more likely to avoid eating unhealthy after being exposed to round ($M=5.89$) versus precise ($M=5.43$; $t(481)=2.24$, $p=.026$) numbers.

Next, we examined if number condition impacted the degree to which affective reactions predicted intention to avoid unhealthy eating. In order to do so, we computed an interaction term between number factor and affective reactions. Our analysis (process model 1; Hayes 2013) revealed a significant two-way interaction between the number exposure manipulation and affective reaction ($b=.21$, $t(479)=2.51$, $p=.01$). In the round number condition, negative affective reactions significantly predicted intention to avoid unhealthy eating ($b=.26$, $t(479)=4.45$, $p=.0001$). However, in the precise number condition, negative affective reactions did not predict intention to avoid unhealthy eating ($b=.05$, $t(479)=0.86$, $p=.39$).

General Discussion

Simple preventive actions, such as getting immunized, avoiding unhealthy eating etc., could prevent many health problems and their associated costs. Across different settings using both intentional and behavioral measures, this research shows that exposure to round versus precise numbers can lead people to respond more affectively and thereby increase people’s likelihood to adopt preventive behaviors. These findings contribute both to literature on numerical cognition and affective decision making.

Access to health-related information has never been easier. Whether it is understanding more about effectiveness of different medical treatments or the risks associated with getting a disease, people can now easily access information through online and offline sources. Much of this information is presented numerically. Our findings show that a simple strategy of expressing such numerical information using round (vs. precise) numbers can increase adoption of preventive behaviors, thereby reducing health risks and ultimately saving lives.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Goal-setting is a crucial determinant of performance and well-being. But how should goals be set? The prevailing answer focuses on the specificity and difficulty of a goal’s objective (Locke and Latham 1990, 2002). Specific, challenging goals generally improve performance relative to non-specific “do-your-best” goals, and “moderately vague” goals like range goals (e.g., lose 10-15 pounds) fall in between. Specific goals are thus widely considered the “gold standard” of effective goal-setting.

We propose an alternative approach to understanding range goals. Drawing on the theory of goals-as-reference points (Heath, Larrick, and Wu 1999), we construe range goals as offering two possible reference points (vs. the single reference point of specific goals; Scott and Nowlis 2013), and posit that these dual reference points can be leveraged to improve performance. Extending prior work treating range goals as less precise (and thus less motivating) than specific goals (Locke and Latham 1990; Wright and Kacmar 1994), we demonstrate that range goals can sometimes be more motivating than specific goals.

When pursuing a range goal, people can adopt one of three reference-point strategies: focusing on just the lower endpoint, just the upper endpoint, or switching between the lower and upper endpoints. The lower endpoint of the range defines the outcome that avoids failure, so intuitively, some people may adopt it as their (sole) reference point. The upper endpoint, in contrast, demarcates a high level of performance, so more motivated individuals may adopt it as their (sole) reference point (treating it like a high specific goal). Alternatively, some people may use both range endpoints as reference points by, for example, initially focusing on the lower endpoint (e.g., lose 10 pounds) then switching to the upper endpoint (e.g., lose 15 pounds) after accumulating goal progress.

We propose that treating the dual endpoints of a range goal as sequential targets and switching from the lower to the upper endpoint produces the highest level of performance—even compared to a specific goal set at the top end of the range. A key tenet of goals-as-reference-points theory is that motivation increases with proximity to a salient reference point (Heath et al. 1999; Kivetz, Urmsinsky, and Zheng 2006). Relative to focusing on one endpoint or setting an equivalent specific goal, switching from the lower to the upper endpoint should keep goal pursuers closer to their salient reference point for more of the goal pursuit process, improving motivation and performance. Thus while high specific goals may be the gold standard in the aggregate, range goals can match (“select upper”) or even exceed (“switching”) the performance of specific goals, depending on the reference-point strategy used.

Three experiments test these predictions in the context of an effortful proofreading task, identifying what strategies consumers naturally adopt when pursuing range goals (“find 8-12 errors”) and how those strategies affect performance. Study 1 identifies reference-point strategy using a funneled debrief and Study 2 measures reference point focus (lower or upper endpoint) repeatedly over the course of the task. In both cases, results show that the proposed ‘switching’ strategy (31% of participants in Study 1, 45% in Study 2) and the ‘select upper’ strategy (32% in Study 1, 26% in Study 2) are most common. Furthermore, as predicted, range goal pursuers who use the ‘select upper’ strategy perform no worse than those with a high specific goal (“find 12 errors”) and those who use the ‘switching’ strategy perform significantly better. Thus the lower aggregate performance of range (vs. specific) goal pursuers, as observed in our data and in prior research, is driven by a relatively small number of individuals who adopt an ineffective strategy for pursuing their range goal (i.e., ‘select lower,’ 18% in each study).

To test the causal effect of reference-point strategy on performance, Study 3 manipulates strategies using instructions to encourage either a ‘select upper’ or a ‘switching’ strategy. Range goal pursuers who received the ‘switching’ instructions performed significantly better than those who received the ‘select upper’ instructions. This demonstrates the causal effect of the proposed ‘switching’ strategy as a way to enhance motivation by leveraging both range endpoints as reference points. Furthermore, it indicates the possibility of improving range goal performance through simple instructions to encourage the adoption of more effective strategies.

From earning a promotion to losing weight to saving for retirement, effective goal-setting is crucial to obtaining desired outcomes. While the notion that specific goals improve performance is widely accepted, the current research shows that when the dual endpoints of a range goal are treated as sequential reference points, range goals can outperform specific goals set at the top of the range. This insight can help consumers succeed at a variety of personal goals, and can also help to enhance motivation and improve outcomes in group goal pursuits (e.g., charitable fundraising), marketing initiatives (e.g., loyalty reward programs), and organizational or educational settings.

Our findings contribute to understanding how multiple reference points influence judgment and decision-making. Although several disciplines have studied the effects of goals-as-reference points (Abeler, Falk, Goette, and Huffman 2011; Allen, Dechow, Pope, and Wu 2016; Dai, Milkman, and Riis 2014, 2015; Heath et al. 1999; Pope and Simonsohn 2011), how people choose (or switch) between multiple available reference points is less well understood. A few investigations have included both a specific goal and a baseline or starting point (Bonezzi, Brendl, and De Angelis 2011; Koo and Fishbach 2008; March and Shapira 1992), but none consider the dual endpoints of a range goal. By identifying strategies people adopt for range goals (and consequences for performance), the present investigation furthers understanding of this important question.

Why do some people focus on just one endpoint of the range rather than switch? Properties of the task (e.g., difficulty, enjoyment) or the range goal itself (e.g., width, incentives, being self-set vs. assigned) might influence what reference-point strategy people adopt, but this merits further investigation. Examining these and other factors that shape range goal pursuers’ strategies can allow for further refinement of the present findings, which offer valuable insights for effectively setting and pursuing range goals.

REFERENCES


Counterfeits Can Benefit Original Brands When People are Caught Using Counterfeits: The Role of Face Restoration
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Counterfeit products are typically inferior-quality imitations of genuine products, especially ones that carry a high brand value (Lai and Zaichkowsky 1999), usually sold at a much lower price to be affordable for everyday consumers. As for the impact of counterfeit on the genuine products, previous research revealed mixed findings. On the one hand, counterfeits can reduce consumers’ demand for genuine products, particularly luxury ones (Wilcox et al. 2009). However, Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) found that over 70% of survey respondents indicated that the availability of counterfeits does not decrease their faith in and purchase intention for genuine (luxury) brands. Thus, there are different views regarding whether counterfeit products benefit or harm the image and equity of genuine products. This incongruity illustrates the complexity of understanding counterfeit consumption, as well as the need for further study to understand its impact for both consumers and marketers.

In the current investigation, we add to this literature by examining how a specific phenomenon, namely being caught with counterfeits, would increase consumers’ preference for the genuine products. We propose an interactive effect between consumers’ self-construal (interdependent vs. independent) and product type (symbolic vs. functional). Specifically, we hypothesize that consumers with an interdependent self-construal who are caught using symbolic (vs. functional) products increase their preference for genuine products because they are embarrassed and wish to restore face — and one (but not the only) way to do so is by consuming the genuine version of the counterfeit product that they use or wear. We also predict no effect on preference for genuine products among consumers with an independent self-construal because they are not embarrassed when caught using such products. We test and confirm our hypotheses in a series of four experimental studies.

Theoretical Background
Caught Using Counterfeit Products
Research on counterfeit consumption has predominantly explored its pre-purchase antecedents, such as how and why consumers procure counterfeit products. For example, Wilcox et al. (2009) argued that consumers buy counterfeit when the genuine product, especially in the case of luxuries, provides a social-adjustive function. Other studies have focused on other factors such as the product attributes and cultural norms that determine consumers’ decisions to purchase counterfeit products (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler 2006). Interestingly, only a few studies have examined the post-purchase phases. Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) and Amaral and Loken (2016) investigated how the owners of genuine products feel and value their authentic merchandise when they see that other consumers are sporting counterfeit products. However, it is not known how consumers who buy, use, and/or wear counterfeit products themselves subsequently change their preference for genuine products. This motivated our present inquiry in which we focus specifically on consumers who are caught using counterfeit products.

Consumers buy counterfeit products primarily because they typically resemble, superficially at least, genuine or luxury products in terms of the prestige that they convey, but they cost far less than originals (Cordell et al. 1996; Grossman and Shapiro 1988). Purchasing based on a desire to convey prestige to others means that, if they are caught using counterfeits, consumers should feel embarrassed for using a product that only superficially appears prestigious but is actually not. Embarrassment results from a public observation of an action that others consider inappropriate; it threatens the positive public self-image that people convey; and it impairs the effectiveness of social interactions (Dahl, Manchanda, and Argo 2001). The emphasis is on public action, in that embarrassment is distinct from what an individual feels alone (Keltner and Buswell 1997). Behaviorally, embarrassment motivates individuals to take actions that restore their self-image (Feinberg, Willer, and Keltner 2012), also known as restoring face. According to Goffman (1967), face is a positive self-image that is affirmed through interaction with others. It is a social resource that is maintained, enhanced, or lost through interpersonal interactions. In our case, being caught with counterfeits should result in embarrassment and drive consumers to restore their face because they are observed using products that go against socially-approved norms and that elicit social disapproval.

We hypothesize that one (but not the only) way to restore face — that is, in facework (Jiang and Cova 2012) — is to opt for the genuine version of the counterfeit product that consumers are caught using. Given that consumers caught using counterfeits are embarrassed because their products only convey prestige but are not actually prestigious, this should motivate them to restore their face by acquiring and possessing the product that is actually prestigious — that is, the genuine article.

Interdependent Consumers and Symbolic Products
However, not every consumer who is caught using counterfeit products should demonstrate a greater preference for genuine, and she/he should not show a greater preference for generics when caught with any product. Rather, the preference for genuine products should be strongest for consumers with interdependent (vs. independent) self-construals who are caught using counterfeit symbolic (vs. functional) products. The distinction in product type is crucial (Penz and Stottinger 2005). Symbolic products allow consumers to express their actual or ideal self-image (Onkvisit and Shaw 1987). Functional products provide consumers with utility or other functional benefits (Yoo, Chung, and Han 2006). It is important to note that the same product can be either symbolic or functional depending on how consumers view and use it. A handbag can be symbolic since it offers feelings of status or professionalism, but it can also be functional because it allows women to carry everyday articles. Thus, given that symbolic products are more important for consumers’ self-image, we firstly expect that consumers who are caught with counterfeit symbolic products should show a greater preference for genuine articles to than those who are caught with counterfeit functional products.

We secondly — and perhaps more importantly — predict that consumers with interdependent self-construals should express a greater preference for genuine articles when caught with a counterfeit symbolic product, compared to those with independent self-construals. Purchase of symbolic products is strongest by consumers high on
face consciousness (Chen et al. 2014), namely those with interdependent self-construals (Hwang, Francesco, and Kessler 2003). Members of interdependent cultures view the self as part of a collective identity with others, and they view face as a socially-defined aspect. This concern for face makes Asian consumers less tolerant of social failures (Chan, Wan, and Sin 2009). Consumers with interdependent self-construals should be more embarrassed when caught using counterfeit symbolic products because they lose an aspect of the self that they define and convey socially. They are likely to be seen as frugal, vain, or that they intend to impress others without putting in the effort (Communi 2009). This also makes it more likely that interdependent consumers who have been embarrassed when “caught in the act” should express a stronger preference for genuine products, in comparison to independent consumers. Indeed, negative evaluations motivate interdependent consumers to protect their public self-image to maintain their well-being that is largely defined by their social self-worth (Dickerson, Gruenewald, and Kemeny 2004).

In sum, we hypothesize that interdependent (vs. independent) consumers feel embarrassed when they are caught using counterfeit symbolic (vs. functional) products, motivating their preference for the genuine versions as a means to restore face. We test our proposed framework in four studies.

Study 1

Study 1 demonstrated our main hypothesis that interdependent (vs. independent) consumers caught with counterfeit symbolic (vs. functional) products express a greater preference for genuine products, compared to a baseline condition in which they sport the counterfeit products but are not caught using them.

Method. This study used a 2 (self-construal: interdependent, independent) × 2 (product type: symbolic, functional) × 2 (caught: yes, no) between-participants design. Participants (n = 173) from a large university in China first finished a pronoun circling task which primed them either an interdependent or independent self-construal (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Then they randomly received one of two ad copy conditions for a Longines watch that highlighted either its symbolic or functional benefits, which we adapted from Wilcox et al. (2009). Subsequently, participants were shown an actual counterfeit Longines watch and asked to wear the watch, ostensibly as market research for Longines (the actual company) to understand consumers’ interest in counterfeit versions of its products. Afterwards, participants proceeded to a different room while wearing the counterfeit Longines watch, ostensibly to help another researcher with their study while we were preparing the second part of the Longines watch study. They were either “caught” or “not caught” by a confederate in this unrelated task. We obtained participants’ preference change for a genuine Longines watch by subtracting the purchase intent measured before the counterfeit Longines watch usage task from the intent measured afterwards.

Results. We first conducted manipulation check for our manipulations of self-construal as well as product type and got results validating the manipulations. Then we conducted a 2 × 2 ANOVA and found a main effect of being caught or not with a counterfeit watch, with participants who were caught scoring higher on preference than those not caught (β = 3.92, S.E. = 1.71, t = 2.29, p = .02). This offers evidence for our fundamental hypothesis that being caught with counterfeits in general can shift preference towards genuine products, relative to not being caught at all. Crucially, the three-way interaction was marginally significant (F = 3.43, p = .07). As such, we analyzed the 2 (self-construal) × 2 (product type) interaction within each of the caught and not caught conditions to further decompose the effects. When the participants were caught using counterfeits, the 2 × 2 interaction was significant (F = 3.89, p = .05). Subjects with interdependent self-construals indicated a more positive preference change for a genuine Longines watch in the symbolic than functional conditions (M_{symbolic} = 1.17 vs. M_{functional} = .17, t = 2.87, p = .005). In contrast, students with independent self-construals did not show such a preference change for a genuine Longines watch (M_{symbolic} = .51 vs. M_{functional} = .47, p = .90). However, when the students were not caught by others, there was neither a main effect nor a two-way interaction (p > .55).

Study 1 provided beginning evidence for our proposition. Since there is no effect in the condition where consumers use counterfeit but are not caught by others, we only focused on the “caught” situation in the following studies.

Study 2

Study 2 aims to replicate the results from Study 1 and also demonstrate that being caught with counterfeit symbolic products increases interdependent consumers’ embarrassment, which then mediates their preference for genuine products.

Method. This study used a 2 (product type: symbolic, functional) × 2 (self-construal: interdependent, independent) between-participants design. 135 undergraduate students from a large university in Australia participated in this study. We first primed self-construal using the Sumerian warrior story task (Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto 1991). The manipulation of product type was the same as in Study 1 except using a different brand Tissot. Then participants imagined being caught with a counterfeit Tissot watch at a friend’s party. Upon completion, participants completed willingness to pay for genuine Tissot watch that we adapted from Rucker and Galinsky (2008). Participants also indicated on separate 9-point scales (1 = “Not at all” to 9 = “Very much”) the extent they felt the following emotions at the current instant: ashamed, embarrassed, insecure, and vulnerable.

Results. As predicted, a 2 × 2 ANOVA on students’ willingness to pay (WTP) for a genuine Tissot watch revealed only an interaction between the two factors (F = 10.10, p < .002). Participants primed with interdependence expressed a higher WTP for genuine Tissot watches when they imagined being caught with counterfeit symbolic products rather than with counterfeit functionals (M_{symbolic} = 6.26 vs. M_{functional} = 4.30, t = 3.32, p < .001). No such effect emerged for participants with independent self-construal (M_{symbolic} = 4.83 vs. M_{functional} = 5.64, p = .21). A moderated mediation analysis with embarrassment as mediator was significant (95% CI: -1.51, -0.07), supporting our hypothesis.

Study 3

In Study 3, we aim to demonstrate that being caught with counterfeit symbolic products also increases their motivation to restore face, which then also mediates their preference for genuine articles.

Method. This study used a 2 (self-construal: interdependent, independent) × 2 (product type: symbolic, functional) between-participants design, in which self-construal was measured and product type was manipulated. Participants (n = 129) completed a similar manipulation of product type of iPhone 5s and the self-construal measurement (Singelis 1994). We also assessed participants’ motivation to restore face by asking them to indicate their agreement with the following statement on a single 7-point scale (1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly agree”): “After being caught wearing a counterfeit iPhone 5s, I can restore face by purchasing and using a genuine iPhone”.

Results. As predicted, the product type × self-construal interaction was significant (β = .70, S.E. = .29, t = 2.43, p = .02). Specifically, students with an independent self-construal (+1 S.D.) indicated a more positive preference for a genuine iPhone after getting caught using counterfeit symbolic products than counterfeit functionals (β = 1.04,
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S.E. = .42, t = 2.78, p = .01). But for participants with an independent self-construal (-1 S.D.), there was no such difference (p = .31). A moderated mediation analysis with face restoration as mediator was significant (95% CI: .03, .49).

Study 4

In Study 4, we present a boundary condition for the effect. Interdependent consumers no longer prefer genuine symbolic products even when they are caught with them when they do not expect to see again the other individuals who caught them.

Method. The study used a 2 (expected re-encounter: yes, no) × 2 (product type: symbolic, functional) × 2 (self-construal: interdependent, independent) between-participants design (n = 284). We manipulated self-construal and product type using the same tasks as in Study 2. In the scenarios in which participants imagined being caught while wearing a counterfeited Tissot watch at a party, half of them specifically imagined that they expected to attend another party the week after with the same party attendees, while the other half did not have such an expectation.

Results. A 2 × 2 × 2 ANOVA revealed that the three-way interaction of product type, self-construal, and expected re-encounter was significant (F = 3.73, p = .05). When participants expected to see the same party attendees again, the 2 × 2 interaction was significant (F = 5.44, p = .02). Participants primed with interdependence expressed a greater preference for genuine Tissot watches when they imagined being caught with counterfeit symbolics rather than with counterfeit functionals (M_iden = 5.88 vs. M_func = 4.60, t = 2.43 p = .016). In contrast, participants primed with independence expressed a similar preference whether they imagined being caught with counterfeit symbolics or with counterfeit functionals (M_iden = 5.34 vs. M_func = 5.46, p = .69). But when participants did not expect to see the same party attendees again, there was no two-way interaction between self-construal and product type (c).

In conclusion, this research focus on being caught with counterfeits, thus adding a component to this domain of study that is largely missing in the literature. Our findings offer contributions for academic scholars, policy makers, and marketing practitioners.

REFERENCES


Design an Experience Bundle: The Role of Experience Structure

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Imagine planning a spring vacation and coming across an ad that features a six-day voluntourist trip. The ad suggests an itinerary where half of the trip involves volunteering in jungle restoration in the Amazon and the other half sightseeing in Peru. This is an example of an experience bundle, a bundle that is composed of two or more experiences (e.g., volunteering and sightseeing) that are usually consumed independently of one another. To maximize desire for this bundle, an important decision must be made by marketers: how should the experiences in the bundle be structured? Should the trip be structured such that consumers will complete sightseeing in the first three days before jungle restoration (i.e., sequential structure), or should the trip be structured to include sightseeing experiences and jungle restoration (i.e., alternating structure) during each day?

With three studies involving a variety of experience bundles, we find that alternately (vs. sequentially) structured experience bundles are more preferred. This is because an alternating structure allows consumers to infer greater value with an experience bundle, which leads to higher complementarity perception. For example, when the voluntour trip is structured sequentially, consumers may infer that the jungle restoration experience will be spiritually rewarding and that the touring experience will be fun. In other words, the multisensory elements, events, and benefits of each experience are processed mainly independently of one another. In contrast, consumers may infer additional benefits when the jungle restoration and sightseeing experiences are alternated throughout the trip. Not only will consumers identify that the jungle restoration will be spiritually rewarding and the sightseeing will be fun, but they may also infer that boating along the Amazon River (toursing event) will be relaxing after finishing a half-day of tree-planting (volunteer event). Further, appreciation of the river-maintenance activity (volunteer event) on the following day may also be enhanced. It is these inferred values that enhances complementarity perception and high evaluations for alternately structured experience bundles.

In study 1, participants (N=110) evaluated a French Festival event in a between-subjects design. The festival was composed of three films (different genres) and three acrobatic shows (different themes), and was structured either alternately or sequentially. Supporting our expectations, the alternately (vs. sequentially) structured French festival was perceived more favorably to consumers. Notably, a follow-up study with 80 participants found no differences in variety perceptions (Kahn and Wansink 2004) between the alternately and sequentially structured bundles, ruling out this perception as an alternative explanation to our hypothesized effect.

In study 2, participants (N=97; between-subjects design) were asked to evaluate a full-day Toronto trip and indicate how complementary the trip seemed to be (Koukova, Kannan, and Kirmani 2012). This trip was a bundle of two historic and two modern tours and was structured alternately or sequentially. We also included an inference-impairment condition, where subjects again evaluated an alternating trip, but the individual tour descriptions were displayed on four separate pages. The descriptions, however, appeared on one page in the alternating condition. In this condition, we expected that complementarity perceptions would be reduced if participants had to flip back and forth between descriptions to identify meaningful connections among the tours. Consequently, we expected the alternating trip would also be perceived less favourably. Support for the expectation that an alternating structure would be more preferred was also found in this study. In addition, complementarity perception was found to mediate this preference (Hayes 2013). Notably, the fact that the experience bundle was evaluated less favourably in the condition with descriptions on separate pages (vs. alternating) condition suggests that variety perception is not the underlying mechanism.

In study 3, participants (N=175; between-subjects design) were asked to list their thoughts about the sequencing of activities in an educational trip to Singapore and then evaluated the experience. This trip was a bundle of sightseeing and educational engagements, and was structured either alternately or sequentially. Participants’ thoughts were coded for complementarity inferences. Greater number of complementarity inferences implies greater complementarity between bundled experiences. As expected, complementarity perception mediated preference for the educational trip, such that a greater number of complementarity inferences were generated for the alternately structured trip. Further, some participants were provided with complementarity inferences in the sequentially structured experience condition, and their evaluations increased in comparison to when complementarity inferences were not provided.

To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to examine experience bundles, an increasingly popular market offering. Theoretically, we contribute to the bundling literature in several ways. First, we show that complementarity perception, an important determinant in bundle evaluation (Gaeth et al. 1990; Popkowski Leszczyc and Häubl 2010; Stremersch and Tellis 2002), is quite malleable. Prior literature often assumes, implicitly, that complementarity perceptions are stable. We show these perceptions can be influenced by varying the structure of an experience bundle. More importantly, we show that complementarity perception is malleable because consumers engage in an inferential process when learning about experience bundles. This process has not received attention in the bundling literature. Equally important, we offer insights on how to better design and market experience bundles.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers typically covet the meanings associated with the products they use (Belk 1988; Levy 1959). Rolex wearers want to seem classy, gangsta rap fans want to seem tough, and flag wavers want to seem patriotic. But sometimes consumers use a product while trying to dissociate from the tastes, meanings, associations, or ideals that the product typically signifies. That is, they consume the product ironically. For example, consumers wear “ugly Christmas sweaters” to holiday parties, emulate infamous cultural figures (e.g., Bill Cosby) on Halloween (DailyMail 2015), and watch TV shows like “The Jersey Shore” and “The Bachelor” that they consider categorically awful (McCoy and Scarborough 2014; Thompson 2000). Similarly, when Donald Trump announced his candidacy, liberal urbanites made Trump’s red hat the “ironic accessory of the summer” (Parker 2015).

Although there is an established literature on sincere symbolic consumption – that is, using products to signal who you are or avoiding products to signal who you are not (Belk, 1988; Berger and Heath 2007; Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Veblen 1899) – far less is known about ironic consumption. We ask three questions in attempt to bridge this gap in the literature: Why do people consume ironically? When do observers detect ironic consumption? And, what impression do ironic consumer makes on others?

Why Consume Ironically?

The literature suggests several reasons why consumers might use products ironically. Ironic consumption potentially signals status (Brooks 1981). Ironically adopting “kitch” products (e.g., reality TV, soul food), might help distinguish knowledgeable consumers both from lower class consumers, who genuinely like the products, and less knowledgeable upper-class consumers, who don’t know about the product or how to consume it ironically (Bourdieu 1984; Johnston and Baumann 2010). Another possibility is that irony offers consumers an indirect way to criticize social institutions, consumption practices, or people (Wompole 2012). Klein (2000), for example, suggests that consumers can express dissent for commercialism by ironically consuming mass-marketed goods, like “Baywatch” or Disneyworld (Klein 2000). A third possibility is that people consume ironically to be humorous. People report using verbal irony to be funny (Roberts and Kreuz 1994); they may use products ironically for the same reason.

Study 1

The primary purpose of study 1 was to examine consumers’ motivations for consuming ironically. Participants from Mechanical Turk (N = 408) read a definition of ironic consumption, answered whether or not they had “ever used a product or brand to be ironic,” and, if so, explained why they used the product ironically. As a control condition, half of the sample alternatively indicated if they had “ever used a product or brand to be symbolic,” and, if so, explained why. Two coders (89% agreement) indicated whether the responses mentioned one or more of the following motivations: status, criticism, humor, identity signaling, belonging, signaling support, enjoyment, functional benefits.

Reports of ironic consumption were not rare, but only a minority of the sample ironically used a product (23%). Participants ironically consumed a range of brands (e.g., Hollister, Polly Pocket), products (e.g., trucker hat, Mickey Mouse watch), and styles (e.g., punk, goth, grunge). The most common reason for consuming ironically was to be humorous, a motive mentioned by 45% of ironic consumers but none of the control consumers ($\chi^2 = 41.89, p < .001$. For ironic consumers to successfully be funny, however, the audience needs to both recognize that the consumer is being ironic and perceive the ironic consumption to be humorous. Our subsequent studies thus investigate when observers detect ironic consumption and how they evaluate ironic consumers.

When is Ironic Consumption Detected?

Under what conditions will people recognize that another consumer is being ironic? People detect verbal irony when they think that an utterance is the opposite of what the speaker intends (Utsumi 2000), just as they detect situational irony when an occurrence is the opposite of what they would normally expect (Lucariello 1994). We similarly expect that people will detect ironic consumption only when the meaning of a consumption behavior is different than the meaning the consumer (hereafter, an ironic consumer) intended. However, a product can be incongruent either because it has an aspirational incongruent meaning or dissociative incongruent meaning (Englis and Solomon 1995; White and Dahl 2006). Because consumers want to distance themselves from dissociative meanings but not aspirational meanings (Berger and Heath 2007; White and Dahl 2006), irony should be detected more frequently when a consumer uses a product with a dissociative meaning. A popular high school student who dresses like a nerd, for example, might seem ironic because others would recognize that (a) the popular kid is not a nerd, and (b) he probably doesn’t want to be a nerd. On the other hand, people should be less likely to detect irony when a nerd dresses like a popular kid (an aspirational identity), a nerd dresses like other nerds (a congruent identity), or a popular kid dresses like other popular kids (also a congruent identity).

Study 2

Study 2 tested the hypothesis that an observer is only likely to detect irony when a consumer uses an incongruent product with a dissociative meaning. Undergraduate students (N = 374) were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (consumer: cool, uncool) x 2 (product: congruent, incongruent) x 2 (cool style: grunge, preppy) between-subjects experiment.

Participants read about two high school students, “John” and “Chris,” who are part of different social cliques. One clique was described as being cool upper classmen, the other as uncool freshman. The incongruent dissociative condition described a cool high school student adopting a style associated with an uncool clique. The incongruent aspirational condition described an uncool high school student adopting a style associated with a cool clique. The congruent conditions described a cool student adopting a style associated with a cool clique and an uncool student adopting a style associated with an uncool clique, respectively. To ensure that the effects did not depend on the type of style adopted, we counterbalanced whether the cool clique was associated with a “grunge” style or a “preppy” style (the results generalized across the two styles).

We measured irony detection in two ways. As a conservative measure, we asked a general, open-ended question: “Based on what you’ve read, why do you think John (Chris) chose to wear this to-
day?” Two coders (100% agreement) assessed whether or not the participant mentioned irony or a synonym. We subsequently asked participants to indicate the extent to which they disagree (1) or agree (7) with the following items: “He is being ironic,” and “He is wearing the clothing ironically.”

Irony detection was low overall, but it was most common when the consumer used an incongruent product linked to a dissociative group (i.e., when the cool kid dressed like uncool kids). In contrast, participants detected less irony when the consumer dressed like an aspirational incongruent group (i.e., the uncool kid dressing like cool kids) or an associative, congruent group (consumer-by-product interaction: \( F(1,366) = 12.16, p < .001 \)).

What are the Consequences of Consuming Ironically?

Consumers use products ironically in attempt to be humorous, but whether being ironic actually makes a consumer seem more or less humorous (as well as more or less likable) should depend on whether the audience identifies with the product being consumed. Sincerely consuming a product signals that the consumer belongs to the same in-group as others who use the product (Berger and Heath 2007; Douglas and Isherwood 1979). Irony, however, distances the consumer from the product and, by extension, those who use it sincerely. Because people have a more favorable impression of members of an in-group than members of an out-group (Tajfel 1982), people who identify with a product should evaluate consumers more favorably if they think the consumer is using the product sincerely rather than ironically. For example, drivers with a Donald Trump bumper sticker should make a more favorable impression on Trump supporters than on people who do not support Trump, but only if the consumption of the sticker seems sincere rather than ironic.

Study 3

Study 3 attempted to replicate study 2 by showing that an audience is most likely to detect irony when a consumer uses a product with a dissociative meaning. It also attempted to extend study 2 by examining the effects of being ironic on impressions from others. U.S. citizens on Mechanical Turk (N = 295) completed the study during a presidential primary race that featured democrat Bernie Sanders and republican Donald Trump. Leveraging the fact that most Americans disassociate from people with opposing political views (Murray et al. 2014), we created two dissociative incongruent conditions and two congruent conditions using a 2 (consumer: liberal, conservative) x 2 (product: liberal, conservative) between-subjects design.

Participants viewed an image of an automobile with a political bumper sticker and reported their impression of the driver. In the conservative-congruent condition the driver had a Donald Trump sticker on a Hummer with an NRA logo. In the conservative-incongruent condition, the Hummer instead displayed a Bernie Sanders bumper sticker. In the liberal-congruent condition, the driver displayed a Bernie Sanders sticker on a Toyota Prius with a peace sign. Finally, in the liberal-incongruent condition, the Prius displayed a Donald Trump bumper sticker. A pretest confirmed that a Hummer, the NRA, and Donald Trump were all associated with conservatives whereas a Prius, a peace symbol, and Bernie Sanders were all associated with liberals.

After viewing the car, participants completed the irony detection measures from study 2 and indicated the extent to which they considered the driver humorous (e.g., “He/She seems like a funny person) and likable (e.g., “I have a favorable impression of him/her”). Finally, to assess participants’ identification with the focal product (i.e., the bumper sticker), we asked if they personally identified with the politician in the bumper sticker (either Bernie Sanders or Donald Trump, depending on the condition) on a seven-point scale from “not a lot/1” and “a lot/7.”

Despite relatively low average levels of irony detection, both the open-ended and closed-ended measures revealed that irony was most likely to be detected when the consumer used a product with a dissociative meaning, in this case a sticker of a politician with opposing political views (ps < .01). Importantly, the effect of detecting ironic consumption on the impression of the consumer depended on the participants’ identification with the political bumper sticker. A moderated mediation analysis (Hayes 2013; model 14) confirmed that the participant’s political identification moderated the mediating effect of irony detection on the extent to which the consumer seemed both humorous (Index of moderated mediation = -.076; 95% C.I.: -.13 to -.03) and likable (Index of moderated mediation = -.11; 95% C.I.: -.16 to -.06). Participants were significantly more likely to detect irony when the consumer used an incongruent rather than a congruent product (b = .80; \( t = 7.94, p < .001 \)). Moreover, the effect of irony detection on the extent to which the consumer seemed both humorous (b = -.09; \( t = -5.01, p < .001 \)) and likable (b = -.14; \( t = 7.86, p < .001 \)) depended on the participant’s identification with the consumed product. Participants who scored relatively low on identification with the consumed product rated the target consumer as more humorous and more likable if they thought the consumer was being ironic, whereas participants who scored relatively high on identification rated ironic consumers as being less likable (see figure 1). Thus, detecting irony blunted the positive (and negative) impressions that people typically have of consumers who use products with which they identify (do not identify).

Study 4

The purpose of study 4 was to examine the effects of ironic consumption on impressions by directly manipulating whether a consumer uses a product sincerely or ironically and whether or not the audience identifies with the product being consumed. Participants recruited from Mechanical Turk (N = 238) evaluated a consumer who was wearing a tee-shirt either ironically or sincerely as part of a 2 (consumption: ironic, sincere) x 2 (product identification: high, low) between-subjects experiment.

Depending on the identification condition, participants either listed a musician who they consider a favorite (high identification) or who they dislike (low identification). Participants subsequently imagined encountering a consumer wearing a tee-shirt of this musician and asking him or her about the shirt. In the “sincere consumption” condition, the consumer ostensibly responded: “I’m wearing the shirt because I’m a fan.” In the “ironic consumption” condition, the person ostensibly responded: “I’m only wearing the shirt to be ironic.” Participants subsequently indicated how the interaction would influence the extent to which they considered the consumer humorous (e.g., less funny/more funny) and likable (e.g., less likable/more likable).

Consistent with study 3, a 2 (consumption: ironic, sincere) x 2 (product identification: high, low) ANOVA revealed a significant interaction on the extent to which the consumer seemed both humorous (\( F(1,234) = 13.52, p < .001 \)) and likable (\( F(1,234) = 31.27, p < .001 \)). When participants identified with the musician on the tee-shirt, they saw the consumer as being less humorous (\( F(1, 234) = 12.22, p < .001 \)) and less likable (\( F(1,234) = 23.03, p < .001 \)) when (s)he wore the tee-shirt ironically. In contrast, when participants did not identify with the musician on the tee-shirt, they saw the consumer as being marginally more humorous (\( F(1, 234) = 2.75, p < .10 \)).
and significantly more likable ($F(1,234) = 9.41, p < .01$) when (s)he wore the shirt ironically. Thus, wearing a shirt of a musician that the audience likes (doesn’t like) led to a more (less) favorable impression of the consumer, but not if the consumer was being ironic.

**General Discussion**

Our research addresses a gap in the literature on symbolic consumer behavior by investigating ironic consumption. Not all consumers engage in ironic consumption, but those who do say that they use products ironically to be funny rather than to signal a particular identity or group membership. For example, a music snob might wear a Justin Bieber tee-shirt ironically as a joke. Whether the audience recognizes and appreciates the joke depends on whether they detect the irony, and this is most likely to happen when they recognize that the consumer wants to dissociate from the product’s conventional meaning or identity. For example, people are more likely to think that the music snob is being ironic if they recognize that he disdains Justin Bieber and his “Beliebers” than if they think the music snob is or wants to be a Belieber. Importantly, rather than making a consumer seem funny outright, being ironic appears to blunt both positive and negative impressions from others. People who don’t care for Justin Bieber will think that Bieber shirt-wearers have a poor sense of humor, unless they think they are wearing the shirt ironically. On the other hand, Beliebers will tend to like Bieber shirt-wearers more, unless they think they are wearing the shirt ironically. By blunting the impression that consumers make on others, ironic consumption potentially offers a safer way to consume products with uncertain, contentious, or even undesirable meanings.

**REFERENCES**

The Biographies of Things: Provenance and the Pursuit of Moral Consumption

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Anecdotal evidence suggests that consumers are increasingly concerned with the background of the products they consume. These product biographies relate to the provenance of products: the people, places, resources, and processes involved in creating and distributing products for consumption. In this research, we show that some consumers want to know the biographies of products they buy so they can choose items with backgrounds consistent with their moral values, such as environmental concerns or social justice. Furthermore, we find product biographies can create tensions and dilemmas for consumers as they attempt to balance multiple consumption goals with their moral values.

Kopytoff (1986) introduced the idea of a product biography as a way of conceptualizing meanings relating to a product’s background, proposing that products, like people, have “life histories” that inform and influence the meanings attached to them by consumers. He notes that product biographies would have many facets covering a wide range of culturally-constituted and objective meanings, including where a product is made and by whom, and that biographical meanings can have important moral implications for consumers. Our goal in this research was to explore whether consumers sought biographical information when purchasing and, if so, to understand the types of biographical information that consumers seek. We also sought to understand how these biographies impact consumption decisions as consumers attempt to consume morally.

To explore product biographies and their impact on consumers, we selected the pseudonymous Springs Landing as the site for our research, a neighborhood within a major metropolitan area in the southeastern U.S., where residents agree to live by certain community values, such as “Diversity” and “Sustainability.” Twenty-five residents were interviewed, and follow-up interviews were conducted with 10 of them. The sample included diverse age groups, household types, and professions. Semi-structured (i.e., open-ended and non-directive) interviews were used to allow flexibility to explore novel or unexpected themes. Individual interviews were coded to illuminate themes within each individual discourse. After coding individual transcripts, a thorough analysis of the data set as a whole was conducted. The overall thematic structure emerged via consensus of the research team. As a test of the credibility of the analysis, we performed member checks by meeting with informants after research team consensus was reached (Hirschman, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Informants repeatedly referred to various processes involved in systems of provenance in accounts of their consumption. Process biographies stemmed from all stages of provenance, from the extraction of raw materials to the retailing of finished goods. Respondents frequently used these meanings to distinguish the morality of one product from another. For example, the PlayStation video game system brought to mind negative meanings related to the materials necessary for their construction for Neil. Although it did not prevent him from buying a game system, he clearly feels guilt for consuming something whose provenance might involve human suffering, even though he is not confident in this knowledge.

Informants also demonstrated an awareness of product biographies related to the resources invested in making and marketing products. These resource biographies frequently related to natural resources, particularly the natural resources contained in products or those used or affected by the provenance of products. One example is David’s concern about the natural resources used in building his own housing community. David notes the irony of building or purchasing something new to be more sustainable: the new thing uses up more of the Earth’s scarce resources, which is often contradictory to sustainability.

The third type of provenance biography mentioned by our informants, person biographies, concerns the people involved in provenance. Our informants frequently expressed concern for the workers involved in the production of consumer goods. For example, Dorothy is uncertain about who specifically benefits from Fair Trade certification and how exactly they might benefit, but she still seeks Fair Trade certification with the hope that she might be helping the workers in the supply chain in terms of work conditions and pay.

Meanings associated with the geographical background, place biographies, constituted a fourth type of provenance biography mentioned by our informants. In some instances, informants even discussed distant or abstract places they had never visited. Lacey, a working mother with young children, is uncertain exactly where the apple juice she buys at Publix comes from, but infers that the United States is “a pretty good place” for making apple juice and that Indonesia is less desirable.

Our informants noted that product biographies could pose a number of dilemmas in their decision making. Informants frequently encountered a conflict between moral values, such as environmentalism and altruism, and pragmatic goals to conserve time and money. For example, Lacey feels great moral conflict when she shops at Walmart:

Our location makes it hard because there is a Walmart superstore right around the corner. And with a child, sometimes it’s just easier to go to the Walmart superstore, and that place is just full of evilness. (Lacey, 30s, healthcare professional)

Like most consumers, Lacey values convenience and will sometimes prioritize it over competing objectives. In this case, her beliefs about the biographies of the products available at Walmart make her feel guilty about shopping there because she feels she is not being true to her moral consumption identity.

Another conundrum was presented by prices. Several informants noted that the low prices of some consumer goods did not make sense given their provenance biographies. For example, Bill, a retiree living on a fixed income, reported that he primarily shops at a local organic grocer, in part, because he feels that prices at national grocery chain Publix and other mainstream stores do not fairly represent the value of the natural resources required to create the products. For Bill, shopping for groceries brings to mind the production processes involved, a thought that compels him to shop for groceries that are more expensive, despite his fixed income and their less convenient location.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Possession Substitutability: Identity and Usage of Rented (Versus Owned) Products
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Despite availability of good rental options, many consumers still prefer to haul or ship their own gear for various activities (e.g., skiing). Understanding psychological antecedents for consumer preference for owned (versus rented) gear is pivotal for marketers in the access-based industry. However, such antecedents remain understudied.

Previous research on consumer preference for owned (vs. unowned) items finds that, when a good is more identity-relevant, owners respond more negatively to its loss (Dommer and Swaminathan 2013; Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman 2011). Relatedly, we propose that when identity (e.g., skier) is more self-central, a consumer will perceive relevant possessions (e.g., skis) as less substitutable due to the classification of such possessions as more self-central (i.e., more “me;” Weiss and Johar 2013). Consequently, the consumer will be less inclined to use rented gear to temporarily substitute a possession even when the rental is better. Thus, the very consumers who could most appreciate using superior gear (e.g., “die-hard” skiers) would be ironically the least likely to do so (due to being the most reluctant to forgo using their own gear). Indeed, such ironic consequences of identity directionally align with the aforementioned prior research.

However, that prior research studied the preference for owned goods only in the context of a possible loss of ownership over the good (e.g., due to sale; Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990). In contrast, we uniquely test preference for owned goods in choices that eliminate a possible loss of ownership, specifically in dilemmas of whether to temporarily substitute an owned item.

Consistent with low possession substitutability as the driver for low renting, we predicted that impeding the effect of identity centrality on low possession substitutability will reverse the ironic effect of identity. We theorized that construing the self in terms of an identity that does not depend on gear for engaging in identity activities (e.g., a “chef” requires equipment to cook, but a “foodie” only needs her taste buds to eat) will impede the effect of identity centrality on possession substitutability. In such situations, greater identity centrality may actually predict more (vs. less) usage of superior rentals.

Results from five studies were consistent with our predictions. In study 1, while planning an out-of-state cycling vacation, participants learned that the local shop rents out bikes identical to theirs. The rental cost was either higher or lower than the cost of shipping their bike there. After choosing between shipping and renting (DV), participants reported the extent to which cycling was central to their identity in real-life. Consistent with lower possession substitutability, identity centrality predicted (1) lower renting and (2) smaller positive effect of lower (vs. higher) renting price on renting likelihood.

To rule-out a “renting-aversion” account, whereby identity centrality simply increases dislike of the unfamiliar, study 2 manipulated whether the gear in one’s possession (i.e., the familiar gear) was owned or borrowed. Further, to rule out a “sunk-cost” explanation involving initial investment in gear, any initial investment in the gear was eliminated. Participants in the “borrowed” / “owned” condition imagined planning a cycling vacation, deliberating between shipping there the quality bike family friends recently left for them [to use for the year they are away / as a hand-me-down right before going away for a year] (option 1) and renting gear at the local shop (option 2). Consistent with predictions, identity centrality predicted lower renting when the gear in one’s possession was owned, but not when it was borrowed.

To rule-out a “mere-involvement” account, whereby, when identity is central, consumers care more about what gear they use and prefer their own because they think it is better, study 2 manipulated the rental’s quality. Further, to promote a causality argument, identity-centrality was manipulated. Participants imagined owning high-quality fishing gear they used when fishing was central to their identity. Subjects in the (“identity-central” / “identity-peripheral”) condition read that fishing is [still / no-longer] central to their identity. Then, after finding damage to their gear before an upcoming fishing trip, participants chose between paying to expedite repairs and renting similar gear (DV). Subjects in the [higher / lower] quality condition learned that the rental gear was [better / worse] than the gear they owned. Consistent with low substitutability, fishing identity centrality (vs. peripherality) (1) lowered renting preference and (2) attenuated the positive effect of higher (vs. lower) quality of the rental on renting likelihood. Mediation analysis showed that identity centrality increased gear classification as “me,” and subsequent possession substitutability – expectation that the experience would be different without one’s possession. Consequently, subjects expressed lower desire to rent regardless of the rental’s quality.

Studies 4a and 4b tested the moderating role of whether the activated identity is product-centric, or whether it pertains to activities that require gear (e.g., listening to music as an “audiophile” requires hi-fi speakers), or product-agnostic, or whether it pertains to activities that can be engaged in directly through the senses (e.g., listening to music as a “musicophile” only requires the ability to hear). Activating a product-agnostic identity was predicted to hinder construal of objects in terms of “self” (Weiss and Johar 2016). Consequently, consumers were predicted to be unmindful of object “me-ness,” and thus not to perceive possessions with higher “me-ness” as less substitutable. To test this prediction, Study 4a participants in the [“musicophile” / “audiophile”] condition wrote two things about themselves that reflect their [music-lover / audiophile] side. Participants then imagined owning high quality headphones. In the scenario, they were online, buying tickets to a silent concert, “where music is transmitted via radio waves and the audience listens to it through headphones.” Subjects chose between paying to use a high-fidelity radio connector they could plug their own headphones to (option 1) and paying a bit more to use the event’s wireless headphones, known for their better sound reproduction (option 2, DV). Results showed that greater “audiophile” centrality predicted lower renting when the activated identity was “audiophile,” but higher renting when the activated identity was “musicophile.” Study 4b replicated the results in incentive-compatible settings. Consequences for identity research and for marketers in the booming access-based economy are discussed.

REFERENCES


The Influence of Purchase Motivation on Assortment Size Preferences
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers’ decisions to purchase a product are often driven by different motivations. Personal pleasures (i.e., hedonic motivations) trigger consumption in some cases and functional needs (i.e., utilitarian motivations) drive consumption in others (Botti and McGill 2011; Choi and Fishbach 2011) — even when the product is the same. In the present research, we ask a novel question: do consumers prefer different assortment sizes when choosing a product for a hedonic versus a utilitarian motivated purchase?

We argue that the number of alternatives consumers plan to review for a purchase is influenced by whether their motivation for that purchase is hedonic versus utilitarian. More specifically, we believe that consumers exhibit different perceptions about the uniqueness of their ideal product preferences under hedonic versus utilitarian purchase motivations, which in turn affect the number of products they review. We argue that consumers believe that their product preferences for hedonic purchases are inherently more unique and different from those of other consumers, due to the idiosyncratic nature of hedonic purchase preferences. Consequently, consumers believe they will have a more difficult time finding a product matching their preferences under a hedonic purchase motivation, leading them to consider a larger assortment of product alternatives. In contrast, consumers with utilitarian purchase motivations tend to perceive their product preferences as less unique compared to others and thus anticipate less difficulty in preference matching, resulting in an inclination to choose from smaller assortments.

Across 7 studies, we find that consumers with hedonic purchase motivations prefer larger assortments than those with utilitarian purchase motivations. Our results show that consumers exhibit differences in their perceptions of preference uniqueness and the level of anticipated difficulty in preference matching between the hedonic and utilitarian purchase motivations, and these two variables underlie the effect of purchase motivation on preferred assortment size.

Our research contributes to the literature in three important ways. We extend the literature on hedonic and utilitarian purchases by uncovering how these two purchase motivations influence consumers’ preference for assortment size. Second, we add to the literature on the determinants of consumers’ preferences for large and small assortments. Lastly, a major contribution of our research is our finding that hedonic and utilitarian purchase motivations have different implications for consumers’ perceptions of uniqueness about their ideal product preferences.

Study 1A serves as an initial test for the effect of purchase motivation on assortment size preference. Similar to Botti and McGill (2011), we manipulate the purchase motivations for the same product, but emphasize the hedonic or utilitarian nature of the end-goal of the purchase. Since hedonic and utilitarian purchases are motivated by a desire to experience affective pleasure and by a desire to fulfill a need or accomplish a task (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000; Pham 1998; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998), respectively, we characterize hedonic and utilitarian purchase motivations in our scenarios as pleasure-seeking and task-driven. Participants were assigned to either a utilitarian or hedonic purchase motivation condition and asked their preference between a small (6) or large (24) assortment of product alternatives. Participants were told to imagine they taking a class on Classical music; those in the utilitarian motivation condition imagined purchasing a CD to listen to for a class assignment while those in the hedonic condition considered purchasing a CD to listen to for pleasure. 56% of participants in the hedonic motivation condition preferred to choose from a large (versus small) assortment, whereas only 24% of participants in the utilitarian purchase motivation condition preferred the large assortment ($\chi^2(1) = 9.17, p < .01$). Study 1B uses a similar class-based manipulation, design, and assortment size measure for the purchase of a book. 65% of participants purchasing the book to read for pleasure (hedonic) preferred the large assortment, whereas only 27% of participants purchasing the book for a class assignment (utilitarian) felt similarly ($\chi^2(1) = 18.89, p < .01$). Studies 1C and 1D replicate this main effect of purchase motivation on assortment size using computers and paint colors, respectively.

In study 2, participants imagined selecting a song to listen to as part of an online study (utilitarian) or as break between studies (hedonic). Participants the number of songs they would like to choose from (between 2-24), before being presented with a selection of songs matching that size. Participants then selected a song, listened to it, and rated their satisfaction with the song and the song assortment. In addition to replicating our main effect of hedonic versus utilitarian motivation on assortment size ($M_{H} = 8.76, SD = 7.03$ vs. $M_{U} = 5.43, SD = 5.62; F(1, 149) = 10.31, p < .01$) using real choice, there were no differences in satisfaction with the song or the assortment. This null effect on satisfaction provides confidence that our pre-choice assortment size scenarios accurately reflect consumers’ real preferences.

Lastly, we argue that consumers with hedonic purchase motivations tend to perceive their preferences as unique (compared to others’ preferences) to a greater extent than consumers with utilitarian purchase motivations. As a result, consumers with hedonic versus utilitarian purchase motivations anticipate greater difficulty in finding a product that matches their preferences, resulting in predilection for larger assortments. In study 3A, we measure both perceived preference uniqueness and anticipated difficulty in preference matching to evaluate our sequential process model (purchase motivation → perceived preference uniqueness → anticipated difficulty in preference matching → assortment size). Participants were randomly assigned to a hedonic utilitarian or motivation for the book purchase, analogous to study 1B. Participants then indicated their perceptions of preference uniqueness as agreement (7-point Likert) with the following statement: “I believe my preferences for books are unique and different from others’ book preferences.” Participants subsequently indicated how difficult they felt it would be to find a book that satisfies their goal (1=Not at all Difficult, 7=Very Difficult). Participants stated how many books they would like to review in an assortment. The effect of purchase motivation on assortment size was replicated ($F(1, 208) = 4.96, p < .05$). Additionally, participants in the hedonic condition felt their preferences were more unique ($F(1, 208) = 10.32, p < .01$; $M_{H} = 4.58, SD = 1.28$ vs. $M_{U} = 3.96, SD = 1.51$) and perceived finding a preference matching product to be more difficult ($F(1, 208) = 5.95, p < .05$; $M_{H} = 4.07, SD = 1.73$ vs. $M_{U} = 3.50, SD = 1.66$) than participants in the utilitarian condition. Bootstrapping results from a serial multiple mediator analysis (Model 6; Hayes 2013) confirmed a positive and significant indirect effect ($b = .13; 95\% CI = (.05, .35)$) verifying our full mediation pathway. We replicated our process model in study 3B using the same paint color manipulation.
Alternative explanations of maximizing/satisficing, anticipated enjoyment of choosing, efficiency of choosing, intrinsic motivation, and goal importance were explored but not supported.

REFERENCES


Gifts of Consolation: Gifts as Substitutes for Emotional Support

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Most research on gifts has examined celebratory gifts, or gifts that are given in response to others’ positive events, such as birthdays or holidays. However, consumers also give gifts in response to others’ negative life events, such as a loved one’s death or a break-up. In this research, we introduce the term “gifts of consolation” to refer to gifts given in response to negative events and examine when and why consumers give them.

We propose that gifts of consolation are a form of social support and thus that giving a gift can be a substitute for providing someone with emotional support. People have the existing psychological ability to substitute a product for a psychological construct (Chen, Peng, Wen Wan, and Levy 2017), and we argue that giving gifts and providing emotional support both satisfy a person’s obligation to provide social support to close others (Clark 1987). Therefore, if givers are unable to provide emotional support, they should be more likely to give a gift and vice versa.

Studies 1a and 1b test the basic effect, examining whether givers spend more on gifts when they have not provided emotional support. Participants (n = 208; n = 209) were asked to imagine that their friend’s mother died and that they were able or unable to provide them with emotional support. Then in study 1a, participants chose between giving their friend one of three arrangements of sympathy flowers (small—$40, medium—$60, and large—$80) or not sending flowers, and in study 1b they chose how much they wanted to donate to a memorial fund for their friend’s mother. Participants who provided less emotional support condition spent more on gifts, than did those who provided more support (p = .006; p = .029), suggesting that givers use gifts to compensate for not providing emotional support.

Prior research (Clark 1987) has found that people feel less obligated to provide social support to people they are distant from, so in study 2 we examine whether the givers’ closeness to the support recipient moderates the effect. Participants (n = 414) first read that a friend’s (close condition) or coworker’s (distant condition) mother had died, and they attended (did not attend) the funeral. Then they were asked how much they would donate to a memorial fund. There was an interaction between the level of emotional support provided and closeness (p = .06). Participants in the friend condition donated significantly less money ($54) when they attended the funeral than when they did not (p < .0001), but the effect was marginal in the coworker condition (p = .21; p = .1). When feelings of obligation are low, givers do not compensate for a lack of emotional support with a gift.

Study 3 tests whether givers substitute gifts for emotional support in celebratory situations or whether this effect is unique to gifts of consolation. Participants (n = 415) read about a friend’s positive event (another friend was throwing them a birthday party) or negative event (their mother died), and that they did or did not attend the birthday party (funeral). Then they indicated how much they would spend on a gift for their friend. There was a significant interaction between gift giving occasion and level of emotional support provided (p < .0001) such that participants said they would spend more on a gift when they did not attend their friend’s mother’s funeral than when they did (p < .0001), but whether or not they had attended their friend’s birthday party did not influence how much they chose to spend on a gift (p = .36), showing that givers substitute more for negative than positive events.

Study 4 examines whether the substitution effect works in reverse: If a giver gives a gift, are they then less likely to provide the recipient with emotional support? Participants (n = 203) first read that a friend’s (coworker’s) mother had died and that they decided to send flowers and a sympathy note or just a note. Then they were asked to write the note they would send. These notes were coded for how emotionally supportive they were. Participants who gave flowers wrote significantly less supportive notes than did those who did not give flowers (p < .0001). This effect was moderated by a marginal interaction (p = .09) such that giving a gift led to less supportive notes in the friend condition (p < .0001) but only marginally less supportive ones in the coworker condition (p = .07). This shows that givers compensate for not giving a gift by providing more emotional support.

Study 5 looks at when givers prefer to give gifts rather than provide emotional support. We propose that when a giver wants to support someone who they think will be difficult to support (e.g., someone who is negative or has low self-esteem; Forest, Kille, Wood, and Holmes 2014), they will give a gift to fulfill their obligation to provide support while avoiding an unpleasant interaction. We test this idea in a lab study. Participants (n = 48) were told that they would provide another participant with social support and were shown the profile of the person they would support. The profile was actually not from another participant but manipulated how easy the person was to support by varying how pessimistic and low in self-esteem they were. Then participants were asked if they wanted to spend five minutes talking to the person about their break-up (i.e., provide emotional support) or pay $1 to give the person a cookie and avoid the conversation (i.e., give a gift). Participants were significantly more likely to provide support by giving a gift when the support recipient sounded hard to support (54%) than easy to support (25%, p = .039), showing that gifts of consolation are an appealing way to support difficult people.

In conclusion, we show that givers give gifts of consolation and treat them as substitutes for emotional support. Our findings suggest that thinking about gifts as a form of social support may be a fruitful direction for future research.

REFERENCES


You are not as Smart as You Think You are: Effects of Self-Perceived Knowledge on Consumer Information Processing and Decision Making
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
It is well established that product knowledge affects information processing and decision-making. For this reason, it has received extensive attention from marketers (Bettman and Park 1980; Brucks 1985; Johnson and Russo 1984; Moorman, Diehl, Brinberg, and Kidwell 2004).

There are two distinguishable types of knowledge that affect how consumers process knowledge and make decisions: actual knowledge (i.e. objective knowledge) and consumers’ assessments of their knowledge (i.e. subjective knowledge) (Bearden, Hardesty, and Rose 2001; Moorman, Diehl, Brinberg, and Kidwell 2004). The two types of knowledge uniquely influence information search and choice behavior (Radecki and Jaccard 1995).

In this article, we focus on self-perceived knowledge. Specifically, we investigate how self-perceived knowledge affects purchasing behavior and decision-making through omission neglect, ignorance of missing information.

Detecting absent information is surprisingly difficult (Sanbonmatsu, Kardes, Houghton, Ho, and Posavac 2003; Sanbonmatsu, Kardes, Posavac, and Houghton 1997; Sanbonmatsu, Kardes, and Sansone 1991). Consumers often rely heavily on the given information and ignore the possibility of missing information or underestimate the importance even when they are aware it is missing. The failure to detect the absence of relevant information can encourage consumers to form more extreme judgments because the importance of the presented information is overestimated (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2003; Unkelbach, Fiedler, and Freytag 2007). Overlooking important omissions often leads to extreme judgments and poor decisions, which hinder the consumer. These decisions are often biased to the presented information. Because omission neglect is consequential, it is crucial to discover its antecedents. However, limited research has investigated the antecedents of omission neglect.

Prior research has demonstrated that objective knowledge reduces omission neglect (Hernandez, Han, and Kardes 2014). Contrarily, we propose that self-perceived knowledge increases attitude extremity and purchase likelihood by enhancing consumers’ susceptibility to omission neglect. For instance, evaluating a bottle of wine, if consumers are confident in their knowledge of wine, they are more likely to focus on given information at the expense of absent information. They believe that the given information is sufficient, form a highly favorable judgment, and decide to purchase the wine based solely on the positive description given in an advertisement.

This research sheds light on the following questions: Does self-perceived knowledge affect omission neglect differently from and more strongly than objective knowledge? How do these differences shape judgments and decisions? Can we manipulate self-perceived knowledge in order to change how consumers process information?

We argue that consumers who perceive themselves as highly knowledgeable form more extreme attitudes and are more likely to purchase the product based on favorable product stimuli. This happens because self-perceived knowledge increases consumers’ vulnerability to omission neglect. Whereas consumers high in objective knowledge process information more cautiously and are more apt to identify a lack of information, consumers high in self-perceived knowledge process information less cautiously and are less apt to identify a lack of information. However, when consumers are high in both actual and self-perceived knowledge, the impact of self-perceived knowledge is greater because of their general tendency to ignore missing information. Finally, self-perceived knowledge is susceptible to change through manipulation.

To test these hypotheses, five studies were conducted. In Study 1, we examined the impact of self-perceived knowledge on choice behavior. 136 participants viewed an advertisement of a bottle of wine. We found that given that the advertisement was favorable, regardless of objective knowledge, as self-perceived knowledge increased, participants chose to purchase the wine more often (p < .05; 1 = Yes, 2 = No).

In Study 2, we investigated the mediating role of omission neglect in attitude extremity and purchase intention. 102 participants were invited to evaluate a bottle of wine based on an advertisement. Regression analysis of self-perceived knowledge showed that participants with higher self-perceived knowledge had more extreme attitudes (p < .01), had higher purchase intentions (p < .0001), and perceived the information as more sufficient (p = .001). Mediation analysis (Hayes, 2012; Model 4; Bootstrap: 5000) showed that perceived information sufficiency mediated the path from self-perceived knowledge to attitude extremity (95%; CI: .0275 to .1395) and to purchase intention (95%; CI: .0720 to .3040).

In Studies 3a and 3b, we changed participants’ vulnerability to omission neglect by manipulating participants’ self-perceived knowledge. Study 3a worked as the preliminary test for Study 3b. In Study 3a, 83 participants viewed information about a camera, and we found that participants who reported that they knew more about cameras perceived the information as more sufficient (p < .0001) and held more extreme evaluations (p < .0001).

In Study 3b self-perceived knowledge was manipulated rather than measured. 153 participants were randomly divided into either a high or low self-perceived knowledge condition. Participants in the low self-perceived knowledge condition were asked if they were professional photographers. We expected most participants would report that they were not professional photographers. Next, participants were invited to evaluate a bottle of wine based on an advertisement. The results show that participants with higher self-perceived knowledge had more extreme evaluations.

Participants in the high self-perceived knowledge condition were asked if they had taken pictures using a camera. We expected most participants to have taken pictures using a camera. Participants then reported how much they knew about cameras on a scale biased (1 = very little, 5 = very much).

In Study 4, a response latency task testing memory for previously presented (vs. absent) attribute information of a camera was used to show the direct effects of self-perceived knowledge on omission neglect. Out of 35 participants, those with greater self-perceived knowledge were more vulnerable to omission neglect. We see this because they recognized previously present attributes much faster than absent attributes (p < .05).
In this research, we offer a new, theoretical account of how self-perceived knowledge affects consumer information processing and decision-making through omission neglect.

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Feel Closer When Event Comes: Time-moving Metaphor and Temporal Estimation
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In the domain of time, various metaphorical expressions of time are borrowed from space. Two spatiotemporal metaphors attract particular attention: ego-moving metaphor in which we are actively moving towards a fixed target event along the timeline; event-moving metaphor in which the target event is moving towards us who are fixed (Boroditsky 2000; Matlock et al. 2011; Richmond, Wilson, and Zinken 2012).

The current research explores a novel consequence of time-moving metaphors: the perceived temporal distance from now to the event. For example, suppose you are going to the dreamy Maldives next month for vacation. Should you feel psychologically closer or farther away to this event when the departure day is constructed as event-moving (e.g., the departure day is coming) versus ego-moving (e.g., you are going to the departure day)?

Specifically, we propose that the event-moving metaphor will make consumers perceive a higher level of emotional arousal than the ego-moving metaphor. Our reasoning is twofold. First, people exert the motion action in the ego-moving metaphor, whereas the event exert the action in the event-moving metaphor. Therefore, people have a higher level of agency beliefs in the ego-moving metaphor, which reduces people’s emotional arousal. Second, the moving state of the event in the event-moving metaphor may induce a higher level of threat perception. The event is moving toward people in the event-moving metaphor, while it is static in the ego-moving metaphor. From an evolutionary perspective, humans are more alert and stimulated to moving objects than to still ones. Therefore, people in the event-moving metaphor perceive a higher threat, which might increase people’s emotional arousal. Furthermore, based on the idea that emotional arousal decreases perceived temporal distance (Van Boven et al. 2010), we propose that people in the event-moving metaphor may perceive the temporal distance from now to the event to be closer than those in the ego-moving metaphor.

The results of three studies provide converging support for our proposition. In study 1, undergraduate student participants (N=57) were randomly assigned to the two conditions. All participants were first asked to read a scenario which described a presentation for an important module next Monday. They were told that they did not like the interview. Time-moving metaphors were primed by asking participants to read two different descriptions of the day (e.g., “As I approach the day of the oral presentation, I hope......” in the ego-moving condition; “As the day of the oral presentation approaches, I hope......” in the event-moving condition). We used two items to measure participants’ perceived temporal distance to the presentation: (1) “How far away does the presentation feel to you?” (1 = right away, 10 = far away), and (2) “How temporally distant do you feel the presentation is?” (1 = very close, 10 = very distant). To measure participants’ emotional arousal, we adapted the scale used in Anderson et al. (1996). Results revealed that participants perceived the event to be farther away in the ego-moving condition than in the event-moving condition. However, for the past event, there was no significant difference in perceived temporal distance between the ego-moving condition and the event-moving condition.

Study 2 tested the two accounts of time-moving metaphor on emotional arousal. MTurk participants (N=143) were randomly assigned to three conditions (ego-moving, event-moving, and control condition). Similar to study 1, all participants were first asked to read a scenario which was about preparing a birthday party for their best friend. We used the same manipulation of time-moving metaphors as in study 1. In the control condition, the event was described as stationary (e.g., “With the party being one week away, I hope...”), and “The party is in a few days: I think I should...”). Temporal distance and emotional arousal were measured in the same way as in study 1. Results revealed that participants perceived the event to be farther away in the ego-moving condition than both in the event-moving condition and in the control condition. There was no significant difference in temporal distance between the event-moving and the control conditions. These results indicated that the difference in emotional arousal in the two time-moving metaphors was caused by agency beliefs, rather than by perceived threat. Mediation analysis confirmed the mediational role of emotional arousal in the effect of time-moving metaphor on perceived temporal distance.

To the best of our knowledge, this research provides the first evidence that time-moving metaphor can influence consumers’ temporal estimation of an event. The current research also complements existing research on time-moving metaphor and emotion. Prior research has demonstrated that the two time-moving metaphors induce emotions with different valences: ego-moving metaphor induces happiness while time-moving metaphor induces anxiety and depression (Richmond et al. 2012). Our research finds that time-moving metaphors also affect the other dimension of emotion, namely arousal.

REFERENCES

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

A rapidly growing body of research shows that incidental sensory experiences can influence consumers’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. These influences can reflect a number of different processes, including the use of sensory experiences as a source of information; the influence of sensory processes on mental simulations; and the grounding of abstract concepts in metaphorically related concrete experiences (for reviews, see Barsalou, 2008; Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Landau, Meier, and Keefer 2010). In this work, we focus on a consumption related sensory experience that has received little attention, namely bitter taste.

An analysis of metaphors and sayings related to bitter taste indicates large cultural differences. Most notably, in the Chinese language and culture, bitterness is associated metaphorically with concepts of adversity. Chi-Ku (“eating bitterness”) means “to endure a hardship,” “to overcome difficulties,” and “to forge ahead” (Loyalka, 2012). In China, young children are taught to embrace the experience of Chi-Ku because it is regarded as a necessary step to progress towards their goals and achieve success, as illustrated by sayings such as, “only via eating bitterness can you surpass your peers.” This metaphorical meaning of bitter tastes is uncommon in the English language and unfamiliar to Canadians. Instead, Canadians associate bitterness with unfair treatment and social injustice. This link is exemplified by a famous quote from Emmeline Pankhurst, an early British feminist leader, who observed, “I have not personally suffered from the deprivations, the bitterness and sorrow which bring so many men and women to a realisation of social injustice.” These observations suggest an association between bitter taste and endurance of hardship in Chinese (but not in Canadian) culture and between bitter taste and injustice in Canadian (but not in Chinese) culture.

Therefore, we conducted three study to test the culture-specific metaphoric effects of bitter taste. We hypothesized that bitter taste (1) influences Chinese (but not Canadian) participants’ judgments of endurance and (2) Canadian (but not Chinese) participants’ judgments of fairness.

**Study 1.** To assess taste associations within each culture, we asked 57 native Canadian students to rate how strongly sweetness, bitterness, sourness, and saltiness are associated with injustice and 87 native Chinese students to rate how strongly these tastes are associated with hardship and challenges (Chan, Tong, Tan, and Koh, 2013). As expected, Canadians associated injustice more with bitterness (M=5.05) than sweetness (M=1.63), sourness (M=4.02) or saltiness (M=3.67; all p<.001); Chinese associated hardship more with bitterness (M=5.77) than sweetness (M=3.28) sourness (M=4.09) or saltiness (M=3.29; all p=0.001).

**Study 2.** To test the expected culture-specific behavioral effects of bitter taste we conducted a 3 (taste: bitter/water/sweet) x 2 (culture: Canadian/Chinese) x 3 (judgment: fairness/effort/motivation) factorial experiment, with the last factor manipulated within participants. Participants (N = 165; average age 20, 55.5% female) were students at a major Canadian university; 84 were native speakers of Chinese and 81 were native speakers of English. They were first exposed to one of three randomly assigned taste experiences (bitter, sweet, neutral) and then responded to measures of motivation and effort in a challenging tasks context and measures of fairness in a job rejection context. As expected, Chinese participants who tasted bitter lotus seeds reported higher motivation and more effort in response to challenging tasks than those who tasted candy or water (simple effect on Chinese for motivation F [2,159] = 7.201, p = .001; for efforts F [2,159] = 4.756, p = .01). These effects were not observed among Canadian participants (simple effect on Canadians for motivation F [2,159] = 641, p = .528; for efforts F [2,159] = .386, p = .680; interaction effect for motivation F [2,159] = 5.253, p = .006; for efforts F [2,159] = 3.722, p = .026). Also as expected, Canadian participants judged the described job situation as more unfair after they tasted something bitter than sweet or neutral (simple effect on Canadians F [2,159] = 2.927, p = .05). The fairness judgments of Chinese participants were not significantly influenced (simple effect on Chinese F [2,159] = .354, p = .702) but showed a similar pattern (interaction effect F [2,159] = .702, p = .488). This may reflect that the Chinese students had acquired some of the cultural associations between injustice and bitterness during their studies in Canada. Study 3 addressed this possibility.

**Study 3.** 72 native speakers of English from a major Canadian university and 88 native speakers of Chinese from a top Chinese university were exposed to one of three taste experiences (bitter, sweet, neutral) and then responded to the job rejection paragraph used in Study 2. Replicating Study 2, Canadians found the job situation less fair after tasting something bitter than after tasting something sweet or neutral (simple effect on Canadians F [2,154] = 4.505, p = .013). Chinese participants were not influenced by the taste manipulation (simple effect on Chinese F [2,154] = 1.283, p = .283), resulting in the predicted interaction between culture and taste, F(2, 154) = 3.249, p = .041.

In combination, these findings highlight that the same sensory experience can have divergent culture-specific effects on judgment. Consistent with culture-specific metaphors, incidental bitter tastes influenced Canadian, but not Chinese, assessments of social justice and fairness and Chinese, but not Canadian, assessments of motivation and effort in a difficult situation. A comparison of Chinese students in China and Canada further suggests that culture-specific metaphors can be acquired through prolonged cultural exposure. How culture specific metaphors moderate the influence of identical sensory experiences, and how such metaphors are acquired through cultural exposure, provides a promising avenue for future research in embodiment and sensory marketing.

**REFERENCES**


Appreciation of Creativity: Unintended Consequences of Thematic versus Taxonomic Product Organization

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Retailers can organize their products either taxonomically or thematically. Taxonomic product assortment involves organizing broad classes of products hierarchically into increasingly more specific categories, whereas members in each product category share many features and frequently serve as substitutes for one another. For example, the category of socks may consist of various low cut, ankle, and knee-high socks. In contrast, products are thematically organized if they perform complementary roles in a consumption situation (Estes et al. 2012). To illustrate, although socks, an MP3 player, and deodorant share few, if any, common features, they are thematically related because they are commonly used together during workouts.

These two types of product assortments are perceived by consumers differently (Diehl, van Herpen, and Lamberton 2015). Taxonomic assortments help consumers efficiently locate and compare substitute products that interest them, potentially enhancing their satisfaction with the purchase process and the goods they buy, whereas thematic assortments increase exposure to complementary products that may otherwise be overlooked by consumers. Studies that have compared the two types of assortment have found that thematic product assortments are perceived as more attractive, but also more effortful to process (Diehl, et al. 2014). Still, to date, little is known about how taxonomic and thematic product assortments influence the processing of consumers who examine them and any downstream effects such processing may have on their responses to goods observed in unrelated contexts.

We reasoned that the related versus compartmentalized nature of products displayed in thematic versus taxonomic product assortments may induce consumers who examine them to adopt a relational versus an item-specific processing mind-set. Moreover, extant research has established that each of these types of mind-sets can persist and carry-over, potentially producing downstream effects on consumers’ perceptions and/or behavior when they later encounter products in unrelated contexts (Kim and Meyers-Levy 2008). Pertinent to this, substantial evidence suggests that relational processing, which entails encoding connections among often distally related concepts, boosts not only creativity but appreciation of it (Runco 1991; Yang et al. 2011). Thus, we propose that consumers who examine thematic (versus taxonomic) product assortments will elicit a relational processing mindset that produces downstream enhancement in these consumers’ appreciation of innovative, novel, or otherwise creative goods, which typically carry higher profit margins.

Nevertheless, certain individual differences may modify whether such downstream effects occur in later contexts. Research on self-construal has distinguished individuals with an interdependent orientation, who define themselves more holistically in terms of their relationships with others, from individuals possessing an independent orientation, who define themselves more analytically by focusing on their internal attributes such as traits or abilities (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Further and importantly, Zhu and Meyers-Levy (2009) established that these alternative ways of thinking about the self more generally shape cognition, such that interdependents seem to gravitate toward relational processing that emphasizes connections and holism, whereas independents favor item-specific processing, characterized by analytic context-independent thinking whereby individual items are set contrastively against others.

Upon integrating these observations, we propose the following. Because interdependents (but not independents) are chronically inclined and possibly more adept at processing data relationally, the impact of thematic product assortments on a consumer’s relational processing mind-set and its downstream effect on appreciation of creative goods may be more likely to occur when individuals possess an interdependent than an independent self-construal.

We conducted three experiments where in each, we manipulated whether individuals examined several thematic or taxonomic product assortments. Subsequently we investigated the downstream effect this exerted on individuals’ appreciation of creative ads or products encountered later in an unrelated context. Experiment 1 found that participants who previously examined several thematic versus taxonomic product assortments exhibited both greater appreciation of creative ads and they better understood them.

Experiment 2 extended on this by examining the anticipated moderating effect of self-construal, and instead of examining creative ads, study 2 investigated the downstream effect of the alternative product assortments on individuals’ willingness-to-pay (WTP) for both creative and conventional products. Consistent with expectations, treatment effects emerged only on individuals’ WTP for creative products, not conventional ones. Further, individuals with an interdependent self-construal reported higher WTP for creative products when they had previously examined the thematic, not the taxonomic product assortments. However, individuals with an independent self-construal reported equivalent WTP sums regardless of the products assortments they had examined earlier.

Finally, experiment 3 investigated whether a mediated-moderation effect of relational processing (mediator) and self-construal (moderator) can explain how product assortment influences consumers’ appreciation of creative products. The procedure and treatments used in this study were the same as those of experiment 2 except that only creative products were included, WTP was replaced by product evaluations, and an indicator was added to gauge individuals’ use of relational processing by asking them to solve 10 Remote Associates Test (RAT, Mednick 1962) problems. Because successful performance on RAT problems requires engaging iteratively in relational processing (Kray, Galinsky, and Wong 2006) participants’ relational processing was gauged by their number of correctly solved RAT problems. As anticipated, results revealed parallel interactive effects of product assortment and self-construal on both individuals’ evaluations of the creative products and on the indicator of their relational processing. In addition, bootstrap analysis indicated that among interdependent individuals, the effect of product assortment was mediated by relational processing. However, this was not the case among independent individuals.

In sum, this research contributes to the literature on both mind-sets and product assortments by demonstrating that examination of thematic (but not taxonomic) product assortments can trigger a relational processing mindset, and particularly among individuals possessing an interdependent self-construal, this mindset carries over and boosts appreciation of creative products and ads encountered later in unrelated contexts. The current research also has important
practical implications. It suggests that retailers can use thematic product assortments to increase consumers’ appreciation and possible purchase of frequently highly profitable innovative, novel, or otherwise creative products that may be featured elsewhere in the retail venue.

REFERENCES
Effects of Age on Taste Perceptions in a Food Service Context
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The population is aging. In 1990 9.2 percent of the population was 60 or older; by 2013 it was 11.7, and by 2050 it is expected to reach 21.1 (United Nations 2013). The aging of population has significant implications for the workforce. The 55+ segment is growing three times the rate of U.S. labor force, and is expected to reach 25% of the labor force by 2024 (Toossi 2015). At first glance it would seem that this predicted workforce expansion could provide an employment opportunity for older workers and vice versa. Alarming, elderly people face important challenges in the workplace (Kaufmann, Kring, and Sczesny 2015). They are perceived to be inefficient, slower to learn, and poorer at remembering than younger counterparts, (DeArmond et al. 2006; Ng and Feldman 2012). In the food service industry, where speed and efficiency are valued, perceptions that older employees are slower or get confused can result in a belief that older workers can decrease customer satisfaction (Bae and Dae-Young 2014). In other words, restaurant managers tend to adhere to the negative stereotype that old equals slow, and assume that slow equals bad (Luch and Tsaur 2011; Bae and Dae-Young 2014).

The premise of this research is that this notion may be incorrect. Although older workers are indeed perceived to be slower, we argue that when it comes to food, slow is good. Similar to the time taken by a craftsman to perfect a project, we argue that consumers have a lay belief that “slow food= better food”. Grounded in the literature about the Slow Food Movement, which advocates a more thoughtful consumption and preparation of food (Dunn et al. 2011), we argue that in food context, slowness can be associated with effort and care. Therefore, because older people are slower this slow pace can lead to positive perceptions from consumers.

More formally,

Hypothesis 1: When food is prepared by an older (younger) person, consumers will evaluate it as more (less) tasty.

Hypothesis 2: The effect of age on taste evaluation is mediated by the perceived preparation time.

With four studies we demonstrate that although consumers indeed think that the older cook takes longer to prepare food, they also believe the food prepared by her will be tastier than that prepared by a younger person.

Study 1 (N=648) was conducted online using MTurk. Each participant evaluated 2 products (from a total of 8 products investigated). For that participants saw a picture containing the photo of the product besides a photo of the producer (which was young or old), and the information about the producer’s age. Congruently to the literature on age stereotype we show that people tend to judge non-food related products (e.g. fashion accessories, electronics, decoration services, nail polish) more negatively when designed and developed by older people in comparison to their younger counterparts. However, for food or beverage products (e.g. cookies, soup, cake, chicken and tea) we found an inverse and positive impact of older age.

In study 2, 109 undergrad students participated in a cupcake tasting. The product was supposedly made by Tiane, the cook, who had either 25 or 55 years old. We manipulated age with two hired actors and by reinforcing their age manipulation by informing consumers that Tiane is 25 (55) years old before the tasting. Study two provided evidence that food prepared by an older (versus younger) person is perceived to taste better and leads to higher purchase intention. Further, the effect of age on taste perception was mediated by participants’ perceived preparation time, whereby a slower preparation time led participants to believe that the food tasted better.

In study 3 (N=217 workers from an European panel) we clarify the direction of the age effect (if it was the fact that the chef was older that increased taste perception or if was the fact that she was younger that decreased taste perceptions) by adding a control group where the age of the cook was not informed. This study results show that the age effect seems to be driven by the perception that food prepared by an older person is better, rather than the perception that food prepared by a younger person is worse. Further, study 3 provided evidence that the effect of age on taste is caused by the assumption that the food took longer to be prepared.

Finally, in study four we identified a boundary condition for the positive influence of age on taste perception, chef’s expertise. The study shows that the age effect is mitigated when people are informed that both chefs have high expertise. We demonstrate that when the expertise on doing the food was framed as low the older chef lead to better taste perceptions and likelihood to visit the restaurant, supporting our argument that consumers perceive the food prepared by an older chef as better. In contrast, when both chefs are framed as having high expertise the age no longer impacts consumers’ perceptions and attitudes.

Through four studies—two involving actual taste experiences and two employing scenarios — we show that employee age can positively impact consumers’ taste perceptions and purchase attitudes. Consequently, this research makes a number of theoretical and managerial contributions. From a theoretical perspective, the positive effect of age on taste contributes to age stereotype literature and shows that there are contexts in which age is an advantage (Marcus et al. 2016). Our mediation of “slow food= better food” also contributes to the literature on lay beliefs and food assessment (Hoegg and Alba 2007; Raghunathan, Naylor, and Hoyer 2006; Werle, Trendel, and Arditio 2013; Mai and Hoffman, 2015). Finally, this research also has important managerial implications and shows that restaurant managers should be more open to hiring older workers and should communicate it to consumers.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although recent market studies suggest that consumers may prefer nostalgic products and services when facing economic uncertainty, no empirical effort has been made to verify the influence of perceived economic insecurity (PEI) on consumers’ nostalgic consumption and to identify which psychological mechanism is activated in response to PEI. Therefore, we attempted to fill this gap in this study. Building on previous research on nostalgia and meaning in life, we suggest that PEI, both chronic and temporary, lowers consumers’ meaning in life, which in turn makes consumers feel nostalgic, prefer nostalgic products, and respond favorably to nostalgic ads.

Why does PEI affect nostalgic consumption? Prior studies report that economic uncertainty affects consumers’ various responses such as prosocial behaviors, preference polarization, investment in offspring, saving behavior, health care decisions, creativity, and preferences toward scarce goods. Recently, evidence indicates that PEI also lowers consumers’ meaning in life (Abeyta et al. 2016), because PEI threatens the continued satisfaction of basic psychological needs and therefore hinders consumers’ abilities to pursue personal meaningful goals. A restorative perspective highlights that nostalgia can counteract insecurities and threats to meaning in life by providing a reservoir of meaningful personal experiences that help ease the discomfort (Routledge et al. 2011; Zhou et al. 2008). For example, Loveland et al. (2010) found that social exclusion increases consumers’ preference toward nostalgic products, and consumption of nostalgic products reduces the social discomfort. By manipulating death awareness, Routledge et al. (2008) revealed that nostalgia can buffer the effects of existential threat on death-thought accessibility. To summarize, we hypothesize that PEI, both temporary and chronic, increases consumers’ preference toward nostalgic consumption. This is because PEI threatens consumers’ meaning in life. To counteract the threat, nostalgic consumption can act as an “inner refuge” and provide people with psychological shield and warmth. Four studies tested this hypothesis.

In study 1, 174 adults were recruited to complete an online questionnaire. We measured participant’s PEI, nostalgic index (Holbrook, 1994), meaning in life, childhood socioeconomic status, age, and current household income. The results indicated that higher PEI was associated with lower meaning in life and a higher nostalgic index. A 5000 resample bootstrap provided evidence supporting this indirect effect. In all four studies, childhood socioeconomic status had a negative impact on consumer’s nostalgic responses, but had no significant interaction effect with PEI.

Study 2 examined whether PEI manipulation increases interest in consuming nostalgic products. Additionally, study 2 tested the mediating role of meaning in life in driving the preference for nostalgic products after PEI manipulation. In total, 119 adults were randomly assigned to either the high- or low-PEI condition. In the first task, we used a news article to manipulate participants’ PEI. In the high-PEI condition, the article described the recent economic recession and how the economic problems are likely to persist into the subsequent year. In the low-PEI condition, the participants read an article similar in length to the high-PEI condition, which described a recent air pollution problem caused by a major manufacturer. After reading the article, participants finished relevant measurement. Subsequently, participants completed five choices between nostalgic and nonnostalgic brands in various product categories to form a nostalgic product choice index. Results showed a significant main effect of the PEI condition on the product choice index. Mean scores of the product choice index were higher for the high-PEI condition compared with the low-PEI condition. The results were reversed for meaning in life. A bootstrap test again confirmed the indirect path from the PEI condition through meaning in life to the product choice index.

Study 3 was conducted to conceptually replicate and extend the findings from study 2. First, we ascertained whether our experimental findings can be replicated in populations facing various levels of chronic PEI. Specifically, rather than manipulating the momentary sense of economic insecurity, we treated PEI as an individual difference factor and tested how this variable influences consumer preference toward nostalgic products. Second, we used popular music as the product context to increase the generalizability of our findings. In total, 149 adults participated in this study. As predicted, PEI had a positive effect on the number of nostalgic songs chosen by participants but had a negative effect on meaning in life. Bootstrapping analysis revealed that meaning in life mediated the relationship between PEI and the number of nostalgic songs selected.

In study 4, we tested the meaning-in-life account by examining a theoretically relevant moderator: social connectedness (SC). Current research suggests that enhanced SC may alleviate the effects of PEI on meaning in life. In total, 184 adults participated in this study. Upon arrival, the participants were informed that the study involved three unrelated parts. The first part was a general “Lifestyle Survey” that measured participants’ childhood socioeconomic status and SC. The second part included the same PEI manipulation used in study 2. In the final part, participants received a full-color nostalgic ad promoting consumers to recall “the good times” of their past. After exposure to the ad, participants were asked to report their purchase intention. We found significant interactions between PEI and SC on both meaning in life and purchase intention. Subsequent spotlight analysis revealed that low-SC respondents were affected by the PEI condition. By contrast, high-SC participants were less affected by the PEI condition. We also uncovered a conditional indirect effect of the interaction between PEI and SC on purchase intention through meaning in life. The index of moderated mediation for the indirect effect was significant.

From a theoretical perspective, this research is the first to show that PEI, a threat to meaning in life, can elicit favorable consumer responses toward nostalgic products and ads. This article also contributes to the broader nostalgia field. The literature on nostalgia does not consider the influence of economic factors. The results of our research shed new light on the effects of insecurity on meaning in life and nostalgia. Our findings also have useful implications for marketing practitioners; that is, adding nostalgic elements into marketing activities may substantially improve consumers’ reactions.

REFERENCES


How Group Identification and Stereotype Content Determine the Effectiveness of Ads Portraying Positive Stereotypes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While prior consumer behavior research on stereotypes has largely focused on negative stereotypes (e.g., Lee, Kim and Vohs 2011), this research examines how positive stereotypes portrayed in advertising influence the effectiveness of these ads for consumers belonging to the stereotyped group. We propose that how consumers respond depends on their identification with the stereotyped group and the content of the positive stereotype (warmth vs. competence). We suggest that for high identifiers, positive stereotypes in advertising elicit a communal orientation and an increased valuation of warmth information, whereas for low identifiers, these stereotypes cue an agentic orientation and an increased valuation of competence information.

We propose that the effectiveness and persuasiveness of an ad portraying positive stereotypes lies in how much consumers value the ad’s arguments, which are often closely tied to the portrayed stereotype (i.e., warmth vs. competence). When a positive stereotype is portrayed in advertising, the brand and promoted product becomes linked to characteristics tied to the stereotype. Consequently, we predict that high identifiers will respond more favorably than low identifiers to ads that stereotype their group as warm because high identifiers are more likely to have a communal orientation and therefore be more persuaded by warmth-related arguments. In contrast, low identifiers will respond more favorably than high identifiers to ads stereotyping their group as competent because low identifiers are more likely to adopt an agentic orientation and find competence-related arguments more useful and informative.

In Study 1, we first focus on Asian Southerners to test the hypothesis that ads portraying positive stereotypes related to warmth will be more effective for those who identify highly with the stereotyped group. We also tested whether an increased communal orientation for high relative to low identifiers drives more favorable evaluations of the promoted restaurant.

Undergraduate students self-identified as Southerners completed Leach et al.’s (2008) measure of group identification one week in advance. In the main study, participants viewed either a stereotypical ad featuring Southerners promoting a restaurant that provided warm and welcoming service or a control ad which was identical except with no information regarding the spokesperson’s origins. Participants then rated the restaurant (good, favorable; r=.72, p<.0001) and the importance of communal values (e.g., altruism, harmony, Trappnell and Paulhus 2012).

Regression analysis revealed a two-way interaction between ad type and group identification (β=.99)=−2.42, p<.05). For the Southern stereotype ad, high relative to low identifiers indicated more favorable evaluations, but this was not the case for the control ad. The same analysis on communal values endorsement also yielded a two-way interaction (β=.99)=−2.04, p<.05) and same pattern of effects. Moderated mediation analysis confirmed that communal values endorsement mediated the positive effect of group identification on evaluations when participants viewed the Southern stereotype ad (β=.11, 95% CI: .01, .32), but not when participants viewed the control ad (β=.01, 95% CI: -.11, .04).

In Study 2, we examine ads that positively stereotype Asian Americans as being intelligent and quantitatively skilled (Lin et al., 2005) to test the prediction that low relative to high identifiers will respond more favorably to ads portraying competence-related stereotypes.

An online panel of Asian Americans completed two ostensibly unrelated questionnaires. In the first questionnaire, we manipulated group identification by having participants respond to three open-ended questions regarding their feelings about being Asian adapted from Leach et al. (2008). Then participants rated an ad for “Sherwood Test Prep,” a company that specialized in helping students improve their quantitative skills. While the stereotypical ad featured an Asian American spokesperson, the control ad featured a non-Asian American spokesperson. In addition to the same evaluation items used in the Study 1, participants provided product ratings (usefulness, value, effectiveness, purchase interest; α=.96).

An ANOVA on product evaluations revealed a two-way ad type by group identification prime interaction (F(3, 68)=3.72, p=.05), showing that those primed with high relative to low identification provided less favorable product evaluations, but only after viewing the Asian stereotype and not the control ad.

In Study 3, we examine the responses of Asian American women who are unique in that they can be positively stereotyped as women along the warmth dimension or as Asian along the competence dimension (Shih, et al., 1999). We test the prediction that high (vs. low) identifying Asian American women will respond more favorably to an ad that positively stereotypes women as empathetic and cooperative but less favorably to an ad that positively stereotypes Asians as intelligent and quantitatively skilled.

An online panel of Asian American women completed both gender and ethnicity versions of Leach et al.’s (2008) scale in random order one week prior. For the main study, participants viewed an ad featuring an Asian American woman promoting a company called “The Negotiation Institute” that positively stereotyped either women or Asian Americans and rated the company (good, favorable; r=.65, p<.0001).

To test our predictions, we used two regression models to examine product evaluations. For the ad type x female group identification model, analysis revealed a significant two-way interaction (F(71)=2.20, p<.05). Those high relative to low in female group identification indicated more favorable evaluations after viewing the female stereotype ad but not after viewing the Asian stereotype ad. For the ad type x Asian American identification model, we also found a significant two-way interaction (F(71)=3.14, p<.05). For the Asian stereotype ad, those low relative to high in Asian American identification provided more favorable evaluations. For the female stereotype ad, those low versus high in Asian American identification actually evaluated the company less favorably.

In conclusion, as the marketplace becomes more diverse, it is increasingly important to understand how consumers respond to portrayals of their social group. Given their complimentary nature, positive stereotypes are frequently and oftentimes inadvertently portrayed in the media, highlighting the need for more research on topics in this area. We hope the current research is useful for several different audiences, including marketers appealing to diverse markets, stereotyped consumers sorting through their own responses, and researchers exploring the psychological processes elicited by positive stereotypes in the marketplace.
REFERENCES
Effects of Matched and Mismatched Comparative Advertising Messages: The Moderating Role of Consumers’ Processing Focus

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A frequently employed framework to account for findings in persuasion research focuses on whether persuasive messages match or mismatch consumers’ self-schemata (e.g., extroversion; Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer 2005), goals (e.g., regulatory focus; Lee, Keller, and Sternthal 2010), emotions (Agrawal and Duhachek 2010), or contextual factors during message processing (e.g., temporal distance; Zhao and Xie 2011). Most of this research has documented a “matching” effect of advertising messages, suggesting that matched messages are more persuasive than mismatched messages, though on some (but rare) occasions, mismatched messages have been found to be more effective (Millar and Millar 1990; Aaker and Williams 1998).

Researchers have recently set out to account for these seemingly opposing findings of matched and mismatched messages. For example, Malaviya and Brendl (2014) show that hedonic motives moderate the effects of matched vs. mismatched messages. They find that favorable persuasion outcomes from a match (vs. mismatch) between regulatory focus and message framing occur only when the hedonic motive of the perceiver is consistent with (vs. opposes) that of the message. Extending this stream of research, we examine the moderating role of consumers’ processing focus (cognitive vs. affective) and posit that consumers with a cognitive (vs. an affective) focus find mismatched (vs. matched) messages more persuasive.

We conduct our inquiry by focusing on two types of indirect comparative messages: “leading brand” comparisons (“brand X analgesic relieves pain better than the leading brand”) and comparisons featuring “other brands” (“brand X trucks are better than other brands in their class”). We choose comparative advertising and, more specifically, indirect comparative messages, as our context because: (1) more than 70% of all advertising in the US may feature some type of comparison (Pechmann and Stewart 1990), and (2) though indirect comparative advertising is significantly more prevalent in practice than direct comparative advertising (Pechmann and Stewart 1990), most comparative investigations have focused on direct comparisons (e.g., Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Zhang, Kardes, and Cronley 2000).

Drawing on categorization research, we posit that different comparative claims and ad contexts may induce alternative categorization approaches and distinct types of elaborations. First, consistent with Snyder (1992), we posit that “leading brand” claims invite consumers to compare the advertised brand to a specific (albeit unnamed) brand, leading to exemplar-based processing. Further, “other brands” claims invite consumers to compare the advertised brand to a group of brands, eliciting prototype-based processing. In addition, we propose that when a category consists of relatively few brands, consumers may be more predisposed to exemplar-based processing whereas when it comprises a relatively large set of brands, consumers may be more likely to hold prototypical representation of the category (e.g., Yeung and Soman 2007). Given that both comparative messages of different types (“leading brand” and “other brands”) and categories of differing sizes may influence the reliance on prototype vs. exemplar-based processing, conceptually, and from a research design viewpoint, a match exists when the perceived category size is large (vs. small) and consumers are exposed to an “other brands” (vs. a “leading brand”) message. This is so because both such conditions promote a prototype-(vs. exemplar-) based representation.

On the basis of metacognition research (Alter et al. 2007) and the finding that matched messages are easier to process than mismatched messages, we contend that when processing matched comparative advertising messages (“leading brand” claims in a small category or “other brands” claims in a large category), consumers should experience less processing difficulty, which in turn will engender a feeling-based processing strategy that is affective, intuitive, and holistic; however, exposure to mismatched comparative messages (“leading brand” claims in a large category or “other brands” claims in a small category) will lead consumers to resort to a more analytical processing strategy that is cognitive, rational, and deliberative. We further propose that the extent to which matched or mismatched comparative advertising messages elicit more favorable consumer responses hinges on consumers’ processing focus, whether activated prior to ad exposure or chronically preferred by consumers. That is, consumers should develop more favorable reactions toward mismatched comparative advertising messages if their processing focus is also more cognitive. If their processing focus is affective, they should develop more positive responses toward matched comparative advertising messages.

We report two experiments which provide support to our theorizing. In the first experiment, respondents were first exposed to a cognitive (or an affective) processing focus manipulation task where they were asked to search words related to cognition or affect. Next, they received information about the car market where category size was manipulated (emphasizing there are many or few choices in the car market). Then they viewed a car ad which featured the “leading brand” claim or the “other brands” claim. Finally, they reported their brand evaluations. Our results find that when a cognitive (vs. an affective) focus was induced, respondents reported more favorable brand evaluations where there was mismatch (vs. match) between category size and type of claim. In the second experiment, the cognitive/affective focus was operationalized using chronic construal-level, which was measured using the behavioral identification form. Findings from experiment 1 were replicated.
Regulatory Focus and Donation to Proactive and Reactive Causes

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Charitable organizations often adopt divergent approaches to tackle the same problem. The American Heart Association (AHA), for example, has two distinct types of programs to deal with diabetes: (1) one aiming at fun research to develop new treatments and prevention strategies, and (2) the other focusing on assisting current diabetes patients pay for their treatment. How do potential donors react to these two types of causes? Why? This is the question that this research intends to address.

In this paper we propose a duality in altruistic motivations. While one pro-social motivation drives support for proactive causes where the focus is on preventing negative future outcomes, the other motivation impels support for reactive actions where the focus is on mitigating existing negative situations. While AHA’s initiatives for research and prevention are proactive, its help to existing patients is reactive. A proactive cause refers to the fund-raising programs that aim to prevent something bad from happening before it occurs, whereas reactive cause is characterized by the remedies that aim to resolve the problem after it arises. Notably, this classification is in line with the service marketing literature, which shows that there are two possible strategies to deal with service failure, proactive and reactive. Proactive strategies are implemented before service failure, whilst reactive strategies operate after a service problem appears (Worsfold et al. 2007). From a conceptual perspective, the two types of donation causes differ in who the beneficiaries of the donation are likely to be. While a proactive cause may potentially benefit themselves (including one’s offspring, and future generations), a reactive cause narrowly focuses on the victims who are currently suffering from the problem.

In this research, we predict that individuals’ regulatory focus has differential effects on their preference for these two types of causes. According to Higgins (1998), individuals possess two types of regulatory goals, namely promotion-focused and prevention-focused. The goals of promotion-focused individuals are characterized by the orientation toward seeking benefits, gains, and self-enhancements, whereas prevention-focused people are oriented toward avoiding uncertainty, mistakes, and losses (Aaker and Lee 2001). Because of this, individuals with a promotion focus tend to eagerly pursue their own interest and desires without much consideration for possible social consequences (Brebels et al. 2008). In contrast, those with a prevention focus are directed toward goals like duties, responsibilities, and obligations, and are more considereate to possible social consequences that represent a threat to things one ought to do (Brebels et al. 2008; Oyserman et al. 2007). Consistent with this qualitative difference across promotion- and prevention-focus, cross-cultural literature shows that the goal of individualistic countries (e.g., the U.S. and Canada, where people are usually promotion-focused) is to develop an individual sense of identity and self-sufficiency away from others (Triandis 1995). In contrast, from an early age, individuals in collectivist cultures (e.g., China and India, where people are usually prevention-focused) are trained to become an integral part of the larger group and make contributions to the achievement and welfare of the collective (Triandis 1995).

Based on such differences, we expect that individuals with a promotion focus are more likely to donate to proactive causes than to reactive ones, because of a latent expectation that they or their offspring may potentially benefit from the former, but not so much from the latter. However, individuals with a prevention focus are equally likely to donate to both, as their tendency to donate is mainly driven by obligations and responsibilities, which makes cause type less relevant. These propositions find resonance in recent research examining the impact of regulatory focus on green consumption (Ku et al. 2012). Although not in the donation context, these findings show that prevention-focused consumers are more strongly persuaded by environment-benefit appeals, whereas promotion-focused consumers are more responsive to self-benefit appeals. This suggests that individuals with a promotion focus are more likely to focus on ways and means to self-benefit and be self-sufficient, while individuals with a prevention focus should be other-focused given their drive to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to others. The forgoing discussion suggests that perceived self-benefit is the key mechanism through which regulatory focus affects individuals’ preference to proactive versus reactive causes.

If our theorization is correct, when other-benefit of the cause is made salient, social desirability of helping gets activated and self-serving motivations are subdued (Fisher et al. 2008). This will lead promotion-focused individuals to behave similarly to prevention-focused individuals.

The proposed effects are tested in three studies. Study 1 uses chronic measures to test the core thesis of this research, i.e., promotion focus leads to more preference for proactive (vs. reactive) causes but prevention focus does not differentiate between these two types of causes. Study 2 replicates study 1’s findings using situationally activated regulatory focus, and provides direct evidence on the perceived self-benefit of the cause as the key mechanism. Study 3 manipulates the salience of self-benefit and other-benefit for the same cause, and shows that when self-benefit of the cause is made salient, the findings of studies 1 and 2 are replicated; however, when other-benefit of the cause is made salient, individuals with a promotion-focus do not differentiate the causes.

Study 1 (N=304) was conducted online using MTurk. Participants first read the description of AHA then were asked to indicate their preference for these two types of causes (1 = definitely prefer the causes that help the patients deal with their current financial needs; 7 = definitely prefer the causes that aim at preventing diseases from happening in the future). Afterwards, participants provided ratings on their level of regulator foci, using Haws et al.’s (2010) scale. Participants’ age, gender, and family history of heart disease was measured as covariates. A regression analysis with preference of donation cause as the criterion and prevention focus and promotion focus as independent variables revealed a significant positive effect of promotion focus on preference (β = .14, t(301) = 2.36, p < .05). The effect of prevention focus on preference was not significant (β = -.08, t(301) = -1.45, p = .15). None of the control variables reached statistical significance (all p’s > .50). These results support our hypothesis that individuals with a promotion focus prefer the proactive cause over reactive cause, whereas individuals with a prevention focus have no difference toward the two causes.

The purpose of study 2 (N=172) is threefold: (1) to replicate study 1’s finding through manipulating regulatory foci, (2) to fo-
mally test perceived self-benefit of the cause as the key mediator underlying our results, and (3) to rule out long-term orientation as an alternative explanation. It featured a 2 (regulatory foci: prevention vs. promotion) × 2 (cause type: proactive vs. reactive) between-subjects design. Regulatory foci were manipulated the same way as other researchers (Mourali et al. 2007). After the regulatory foci manipulation, participants were provided with an appeal from a charitable organization, framed as either proactive or reactive. Participants were asked how much they would like to donate to this project. The mediator, perceived self-benefit associated with the cause, was measured by two scales from White and Peloza (2009). A 2 (regulatory foci) × 2 (cause type) ANOVA on the donation amount found only a significant regulatory focus × cause type 2-way interaction (F(1, 167) = 5.80, p < .05). Neither of the main effects was significant (p’s > .50). When primed with promotion focus, individuals donated more (M = 12.44) to the proactive cause than to the reactive cause (M = 4.82, t(83) = -2.00, p < .05). In contrast, when primed with prevention focus, the donation amount did not vary across the two causes (M_{proactive} = 6.82, M_{reactive} = 11.70; t(82) = 1.09, p = .28). These results replicated study 1’s findings. Mediation was assessed with the bootstrapping method, using Hayes’s (2012) PROCESS macro. Consistent with our predictions, the model indicates that the indirect effect of mediated moderation is significant (95% CI = .15 to 7.66).

A follow-up study (N=86) was conducted using a 2 (regulatory foci: prevention vs. promotion) × 2 (donation cause: proactive vs. reactive) mixed design, with regulatory foci being a between-subjects factor and donation cause as a within-subjects factor. Regulatory focus manipulation and the donation causes were the same as in study 2, except that participants viewed two causes and choose only one of them to donate. A binary logistic regression on the choice of proactive (vs. reactive) cause showed a significant effect of regulatory foci on decision outcome (β = .89, p < .05). For individuals primed with promotion focus, a greater portion selected the proactive cause (63.9%) compared to the reactive cause (42.0%, z = 2.00, p < .05). In contrast, for individuals primed with prevention focus, a smaller portion selected the proactive cause (36.1%) compared to the reactive cause (58.0%, z = -2.00, p < .05).

The purpose of study 3 (N=158) is to test the moderation effect of the salience of benefit associated with the cause (self vs. other). Since prevention focus leads to non-differentiation between the two types of donation causes, we only focus on promotion focus in this study. We expect that in self-benefit conditions, individuals with a promotion focus intend to donate more to proactive causes than to reactive causes; however, in other-benefit conditions, they do not differentiate between these two causes. All participants were first manipulated by promotion focus, using the same stimuli as used in study 2. They were then randomly assigned to the conditions in a 2 (cause type: proactive vs. reactive) × 2 (salience of benefit: self-benefit vs. other-benefit) between-subjects design. Donation cause was manipulated in the same way as in study 2, except that an additional sentence was added before the donation intention measure to manipulate self-benefit [other-benefit] salience. We performed a 2 (cause type) × 2 (salience of benefit) ANOVA with the donation amount as the dependent variable. Neither main effects was significant (p’s > .15). More important and pertinent to our hypothesis, there was a significant perceived benefit × cause type 2-way interaction (F(1, 152) = 6.85, p = .01). When self-benefit was made salient, individuals with a promotion focus donated more (M = 17.95) to the proactive cause than to the reactive cause (M = 11.44, t(82) = -2.07, p < .05). In contrast, when other-benefit was made salient, the donation amount did not vary across two causes (M_{proactive} = 9.74, M_{reactive} = 13.53; t(72) = 1.46, p = .15).

This research contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, most studies in this domain focus on donation in general, without differentiating the cause type. Recently, non-profit organizations have started to offer more than one project for the same issue. In this research, we provide theoretical explanation about the difference between two types of causes, namely proactive and reactive. We suggest that these two causes may induce different levels of perceived self-interest and therefore affect individuals’ donation behavior. Such conceptual distinctions among donation causes open a new avenue for future research. Second, our research also extends the literature on regulatory focus. Previous studies on regulatory foci have mainly focus on the distinctions across risk perception. Extending this stream of research, the present study shows that regulatory foci also drive individuals to be sensitive to self-benefit embedded into the decision object. Specifically, individuals with a promotion focus are more responsive to self-benefit compared to individuals with a prevention focus. These findings also add to our understanding of self-benefit/other benefit appeals. For example, prior research indicates that other-benefit fund-raising appeals are more effective compared to self-benefit appeals (Fisher et al. 2008). Our results qualify these findings by demonstrating that this is not true for promotion-focused individuals. When other-benefit is salient, promotion-focused individuals perceive the two donation causes equally. When self-benefit is salient, promotion-focused individuals will donate more to proactive causes.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research examines the interplay of consumers’ positive mood and the type of goals they pursue. We propose and demonstrate that although consumers believe that attainment goals are better for fostering a positive mood, they actually favor maintenance goals more than attainment goals when they are in a positive mood.

Attainment and maintenance goals are two common types of goals (Yang, Stamatogiannakis, and Chattopadhyay 2015). For attainment goals, the current state of consumers is different from their desired state (e.g., save, at least, $10 more this month). For maintenance goals, the current state already matches the desired state; consumers pursuing this type of goal seek to maintain a current state that is the same as or exceeds the desired state (e.g., keep saving, at least, the same amount this month).

Because attainment goals have better outcomes than the corresponding maintenance goals (e.g., save $10 more vs. the same), the outcomes of the former would be considered more affectively positive (cf. Pleemmons and Weiss 2013). As such, consumers who seek to foster and elevate their positive mood may favor attainment goals over maintenance ones (Wegener et al. 1995). This reasoning is consistent with consumers’ lay beliefs shown in a pilot study: When given a choice between the two goal types, participants strongly preferred attainment over maintenance goals in order to maintain a positive mood. That is, according to extant mood maintenance theories as well as consumers’ lay beliefs shown in the pilot study, consumers may be more favorable towards attainment (vs. maintenance) goals when they are in a positive mood.

However, in this research, we argue and show that the opposite pattern can occur. We build on the prior research finding that positive affect can be generated by pursuing other goals involving activities that are congruent with a target goal (cf. Kruglanski 2006). For example, when team members’ private goals involve activities that are perceived as congruent with the target goal they pursue for their team, they tend to experience more positive affect (Kristof-Brown and Stevens 2001). In our research context, positive mood maintenance can be considered a target goal consumers hold (Wegener et al. 1995); attainment vs. maintenance goals (e.g., save $10 more vs. the same) are the other goals that consumers pursue while they are after positive mood maintenance. Because consumers tend to construe maintenance (but not attainment) goals as involving activities related to fostering and keeping one’s current state (Yang et al. 2015), maintenance (vs. attainment) goals are more congruent with the target goal of maintaining positive mood. Thus, to the extent that this congruence can generate positive affect (Kruglanski 2006), consumers in a positive (but not negative or neutral) mood would favor maintenance goals more than attainment goals.

Further, because both congruence effects (Kruglanski 2006) and mood maintenance (Handley et al., 2004) tend to operate nonconsciously, our propose interaction effect is also likely nonconscious in nature. Thus, the effect would persist when conscious cognitive resources are constrained, but be attenuated among individuals more aware of factors influencing their mood. Four field and lab studies involving different goal pursuit domains and different operationalizations of positive mood, support these propositions.

Study 1 examined real-life, bodyweight-management goal-setting behavior of over 1,300 consumers on a goal-management website for one year. Random-effect logistic regression models showed that, consistent with our proposition, consumers in a chronically more (vs. less) positive affective state were more likely to set a weight-maintenance than weight-reduction goal.

Study 2 had a 2 (positive vs. negative mood prime) × 2 (maintenance vs. attainment goals) between-participant design, and utilized goal domains that participants self-identified as important (e.g., work, health). A significant interaction effect revealed that, under positive mood, participants favored maintenance goals more than attainment goals. However, under negative mood, no difference was found.

Study 3 had a 3 (neutral mood vs. positive mood vs. positive mood and cognitive load) × 2 (health goal: maintenance vs. attainment) between-participant design. A significant interaction effect revealed that maintenance goals were favored more than attainment goals in both positive mood conditions (showing qualitatively identical results). However, in the neutral mood condition, no difference was found. Thus, consistent with our proposed nonconscious process, the effect persisted when conscious cognitive resources were constrained.

Study 4 had a 2 (positive vs. neutral mood prime) × 2 (health goal: maintenance vs. attainment) between-participant design and measured participants’ chronic awareness of factors influencing their mood. The mood × goal type interaction effect was replicated. More importantly, the results showed a significant 3-way interaction: The less participants were aware of factors influencing their mood, the more they favored maintenance (vs. attainment) goals under positive mood, suggesting that the effect is nonconscious.

Overall, our research contributes to understanding the interplay between mood and goal pursuit. Although extant mood maintenance theories and consumers’ lay beliefs predict that attainment goals would be better for fostering a positive mood, we propose and show in the field and lab that consumers in a positive (as opposed to negative or neutral) mood tend to favor maintenance (vs. attainment) goals more. Our findings thus add to the current understanding of the mood-goal relationship, complementing the existing theories on mood maintenance (Handley et al. 2004; Wegener et al. 1995). Our results also complement the prior research finding that goal achievement generates positive affect (Pleemmons and Weiss 2013) by showing that different affective states can have unique effects on perceived favorability of different types of goals. Further, we also add to the literature by showing that this effect, resulting from the congruence between maintenance goals and the goal of positive mood maintenance, is largely nonconscious. The effect persists when consumers’ conscious cognitive resources are constrained, and is attenuated among consumers who are more aware of factors influencing their mood.

REFERENCES


The “Smile-Seeking” Giver: How Immediate Affective Reactions Motivate and Reward Gift-giving

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Why do gift-givers often seem to fail at giving what their receivers want? In the present paper, we identify a distinct cause for the disparity between givers’ choices and receivers’ satisfaction, which we term the smile-seeking account: givers primarily aim to induce desirable spontaneous affective display, such as positive facial expression and bodily reactions, as opposed to inducing the greatest receiver satisfaction.

The smile-seeking motive differs from the satisfaction-seeking motive commonly assumed in the prior literature, which characterizes givers’ primary motive as maximizing receivers’ satisfaction, and treats affective reactions as mere signals of satisfaction, consistent with the appraisal theory of emotion (Lazarus 1982). By contrast, the smile-seeking account builds on a growing literature which suggests that affective responses can occur without extensive perceptual and cognitive encoding (Forgas 2002, Zajonc 2000). In gift-giving, the misalignment between affective reaction and overall satisfaction gives rise to a discrepancy of motives between givers and receivers: givers’ choices may be primarily motivated and gratified by the affective consequences of gift-giving, whereas receivers’ satisfaction may be determined primarily by the more deliberative and holistic cognitive appraisal of the gift, albeit also informed by the initial spontaneous affective reactions to the gift.

We present six studies that test the impact of the smile-seeking account on gift choices and on post-giving enjoyment. We present Study 1 with full details on data screening, pretesting, additional measures, and mediation analyses. We then describe with less details Studies 2 and 3A in which same procedures and analyses were used. Last, we present the main results in Studies 3B, 4A and 4B in which data analyses were based on rating and coding of actual gifts.

Study 1: The Giver-Receiver Discrepancy

In Study 1, we test whether givers and receivers differ in their relative preference for a more affectively appealing gift in the context of a gift-registry, to hold constant receiver interest in the gifts and isolate the effect of anticipated affective reactions.

We aimed for approximately 100 participants per cell, based on an expected medium effect size (d = .05) and the use of 30-100 per cell in prior gift-giving research (e.g., Gino and Flynn 2011, Zhang and Epley 2012). We recruited 240 adult participants from Amazon MTurk, paid $1 each, yielding 213 completes (Mmale = 33, 52% Male) after excluding invalid participants (duplicate IP addresses or having failed an instructional attention check in the end (Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko 2009). The exclusion criterion was used in all studies.

Participants read a scenario about a couple planning their wedding, who had sent a wedding registry to a group of friends, each of whom would choose one of the gifts to give. In the scenario, the couple would receive all the gifts listed on the registry, so the net outcome to the receivers was held constant, regardless of the giver’s choice. The receivers would open the gifts at a wedding shower where all the friends would be present. Participants were randomly assigned to either imagine they were the gift-giver or the gift-receiver in the scenario.

Participants saw pictures and descriptions of two similarly priced pairs of mugs, personalized mugs intended to be seen as inducing affective reactions and ergonomic mugs intended to be satisfaction-inducing. Participants, either as a giver or as a receiver depending on condition, first rated how much they liked each option, from “just a little (1)” to “very much (7)”.

Participants then indicated their preference between the pairs of mugs, on a bipolar scale from strongly preferring the first option (1) to strongly preferring the second option (9).

Participants then rated the mugs on several measures. We expected that participants would rate the personalized mugs as inducing stronger positive affective reactions than the ergonomic mugs (“How much of an affective reaction (e.g., happy facial expressions) would the receivers show in response to these gifts when receiving them?” on a 7-point Likert scale). Conversely, we expected that the more comfortable ergonomic mugs would be rated as yielding higher satisfaction than the personalized mugs (“How much would the receivers be satisfied with these gifts when using them?”) on the same 7-point scale.

Results

First, the results confirmed that participants expected the personalized mugs to induce greater affective reactions than the ergonomic mugs (Mpersonalized = 5.79 vs. 4.59, t(212) = 5.08, p < .001), while the mugs were expected to yield similar levels of receiver satisfaction (Mpersonalized = 5.31 vs. 5.34, t(212) = -7.70, p < .001). The anticipated reaction benefit, relative to the satisfaction benefit, was significantly greater for the option intended to be reaction-inducing (personalized mugs) than for the option intended to be satisfaction-inducing (ergonomic mugs; bpersonalized = .48, beyggometric = -.76, t(212)=8.88, p<.001).

Next, we tested our main hypothesis, comparing givers’ interest in giving the mugs to receivers’ interest in getting the mugs. The personalized mugs were more preferred by the givers than the receivers (5.37 vs. 4.81, t(211) = 2.10, p = .037, d = .29), while the ergonomic mugs were more preferred by the receivers than the givers (4.15 vs. 4.87, t(211) = -2.99, p = .003; ANOVA interaction, F(1,211) = 8.86, p = .003). Likewise, givers’ strong relative preference for the personalized mugs significantly differed from receivers’ between the two mugs on the bipolar scale (3.66 vs. 4.90, t(211) = -2.95, p = .004).

This giver-receiver preference discrepancy was not explained by differences in beliefs about the receivers’ satisfaction with the gift. Givers did mispredict receivers’ higher expected satisfaction with the ergonomic mugs (Givers’ predictions of receivers’ satisfaction: Mpersonalized = 5.42 vs. Mergonomic = 5.17; Receivers’ expected satisfaction: Mpersonalized = 5.21 vs. Mergonomic = 5.51; interaction F(1,211) = 18.16, p = .048). However, this misprediction did not explain the preference discrepancy between givers and receivers, which persisted controlling for expectations of receivers’ satisfaction (b = .682, p = .030).

Instead, the discrepancy was largely explained by anticipated affective reactions. Givers reported a bigger difference in receivers’ anticipated affective reactions between the two mugs than did receivers (Givers: 5.89 vs. 4.10; Receivers: 5.70 vs. 5.07; interaction F(1,211) = 23.09, p < .001). Controlling for the difference in anticipated affective reactions, which predicts preferences between the two mugs, we no longer observe a significant giver-receiver discrepancy (b = .219, p > .250; b = .919, p<.001). The effect of role (giver vs. receiver) on the relative preference between mug options was fully mediated by differences in expectations of receivers’
affective reactions ($\beta = .545, CI = [.277, .813], p <.001$), controlling for expected satisfaction. We find similar results using the bipolar preference scale.

The preference discrepancy also persists when controlling for other factors identified in prior literature as influencing gift-giving, including hedonic or practical perceptions of the gift, how much a gift was associated with indulgence or guilt, givers’ and receivers’ constural level (desirable vs. feasible) and regulatory focus (approach-avoidance), as well as social closeness between giver and receiver ($ps < .025$). Response time, gender and age did not affect gift preferences or moderate the effect of role.

In sum, givers preferred to give the mug set that receivers liked less. This discrepancy was not explained by givers having mistaken beliefs about what receivers would be more satisfied with, the predominant account of such discrepancies in the prior literature (e.g., Cavanaugh, Gino and Fitzsimons 2015; Waldfogel 1993; Zhang and Epley 2009). Instead, the results suggest that the givers’ preferences diverged from what receivers liked better due to the givers’ “smile-seeking” motive: givers chose the option that they believed would result in a more desirable affective reaction.

**Study 2: Focus on Reaction vs. Satisfaction in Valentine’s Day Gifts**

We recruited 295 relationship partners ($M_{age} =35, 51\%$ Male) online to make gift choices for the next day - Valentine’s Day. After participants indicated their gender and their partner’s first name, male participants were asked to make choices for three pairs of options, one more reaction-inducing (e.g., blooming roses) and the other inducing more overall satisfaction (e.g., rose buds) as givers and female participants evaluated the same gifts as receivers. Participants then predicted the receivers’ affective reactions and satisfaction for each item. Last, we measured personality traits, current relationship status, length of relationship, closeness with partner, and age.

We replicated the giver-receiver preference discrepancy for all three pairs of gifts (average choices $52.3\%$ vs. $40.3\%$, repeated-measures $p =.001$). As in Study 1, the preference discrepancy between givers and receivers persisted when controlling for predicted satisfaction ($\beta_{role}=.092, p =.007$). Moreover, we find the same mediation via differences in anticipated reaction on preference discrepancy ($\beta = .057$, bootstrapped $p =.028$), even controlling for the indirect effect via anticipated satisfaction.

**Study 3A & 3B: Discrepancy Eliminated When Receiver Reactions Are Unobserved**

Next, we further test whether anticipating being present to observe the receivers’ reaction affects givers’ choices, as predicted by the “smile-seeking” motive. In Study 3A, we randomly assigned 490 mturkers ($M_{age} =35, 44\%$Male) to 2(role: giver vs. receiver) x 2(observable vs. unobservable) between-subjects conditions to imagine buying a blue-tooth speaker as a birthday-gift for a close friend (listed by participants themselves). In addition, participants either imagined that the gift-giver would be present on the receiver’s birthday and give the gift in person or that the gift-giver would be out of town and have the gift mailed. The giver was faced with two same-price upgrade options: gift-wrap (pretended as inducing initial affective reaction) and a LED-light (pretended as inducing satisfaction during use). The anticipated reaction benefit was greater relative to the satisfaction benefit for the option intended to be reaction-inducing (gift wrap) than for the option intended to be satisfaction-inducing (LED light; $t(448)=18.4, p<.001$).

Givers prefer the gift-wrap upgrade (relative to receivers) when they would be present during gift-reception (44.8% vs. 19.8%, $\chi^2 =16.1, p<.001$), but not when they would be absent during gift-reception (27.7% vs. 26.4%, $\chi^2 = .05, p>.250$; interaction ($F(1,445) =7.78, p =.006$). The effect of role on choices in the observable-reaction condition held ($\beta_{role}=.17, t(224)=3.91, p <.001$) when controlling for predicted recipient satisfaction. The giver-receiver preference discrepancy was again mediated by differences in anticipated reactions in the observable-reaction conditions ($\beta = -.058, CI = [-.101, -.015], p=.008$), controlling for anticipated satisfaction, but no indirect effect was found in the unobservable-reaction conditions ($\beta = -0.34, CI = [-.088, .020], p =.219$). Givers only sought smiles when they would be there to see the receivers’ smile.

In Study 3B, we recruited 198 actual gift-givers ($M_{age} =33, 55\%$Male) online three days before Christmas. Participants each specified three gifts they had prepared to give, listed the receivers, rated both the anticipated affective reaction and expected receiver satisfaction for each gift, and indicated whether they would be present when each gift would be received.

The gifts participants chose did not differ in the anticipated level of satisfaction based on whether the givers expected to be present or not (self-reported $M_{satisfaction} = 5.47$ vs. $5.39$, $b_{satisfaction} = -.079, p >.250$). In contrast, participants rated their gifts as inducing marginally stronger affective reactions when they would be giving it in person ($M_{reaction} = 6.01$ vs. $5.71, b =.27; b_{reaction} = .271, p =.069$, observed power = 90.7%). These findings held when we use independent coders’ ratings instead of participants’ self-report. The effect of presence on how reaction-inducing the gifts were (per coder ratings) also persists controlling for social closeness to the recipient and cost of the gift ($b_{present} =.184, t=3.15, p =.002$).

**Study 4A & 4B: Post-Giving Outcomes and Enjoyment**

In Study 4A, we asked 80 participants ($M_{age} = 34, 43\%$Male) to recall recent favorite and least favorite gifts as either givers or receivers, and rated each gift on reaction and satisfaction scales. Overall, whether a giver liked or disliked a gift was primarily predicted by how reaction-inducing the gift was ($b_{reaction} = .199, p <.001$, $\beta_{satisfaction} = -.076, p =.133$). By contrast, receivers’ liking of gifts related to both how reaction-inducing and even more so to how satisfaction-inducing the gift was ($b_{reaction} = .085, p <.033$, $\beta_{satisfaction} = .215, p <.001$). In sum, the discrepancy between givers’ and receiver’s preferences persists even after the gift reception, which may further reinforce the givers’ “smile-seeking” motive in future gift choices.

In Study 4B, we used a longitudinal design to track givers’ preference and enjoyment after actual gift-giving. We recruited 87 Christmas gift-givers before and after Christmas ($M_{age} = 37, 58\%$Male). Participants indicated whether they had been present for the gift reception, rated their perception of the receiver’s immediate reaction to the gift, their perception of the receiver’s longer-term satisfaction with the gift, and their own enjoyment from having given each gift.

Reaction-inducing gifts resulted in greater giver enjoyment, via greater receiver reaction that the givers reported (indirect effect $\beta = 2.93, CI = [.98, 6.58], p <.001$), whereas satisfaction-inducing gifts did not significantly contribute to giver’s enjoyment, even though givers reported perceiving greater receiver satisfaction for such gifts (indirect effect $\beta = .55, CI = [-.66, 2.34], p =.45$). Moreover, givers enjoyed the gift-giving experience substantially more if they had been present to see the receivers’ reactions (87.1% vs. 46.3%, $\beta = 40.9, p <.001$), even controlling for interpersonal closeness ($\beta = 38.7, p <.001$). Consistent with Study 3, observing the receiver’s reaction was critical to the giver’s enjoyment of gift-giving.
General Discussion

The foregoing studies offer evidence for a “smile-seeking” motive underlying gift-giving behaviors, challenging previous assumptions that giver-receiver discrepancies are due to givers mispredicting receiver satisfaction. This is an important distinction because the receiver’s display of affective reactions to a gift may often differ from the receiver’s satisfaction with the same gift. Facing a tradeoff between gifts that induce greater reaction and gifts that yield greater satisfaction, givers’ preference for reaction-maximizing gifts will deviate from what their friends, relationship partners and family members would prefer to receive. Furthermore, the givers’ smile-seeking preference was contingent on anticipating an opportunity to observe receivers’ affective reactions during gift reception. When givers believe that they would not observe the receiver’s reaction, the giver-recipient discrepancy was eliminated. The smile-seeking preference also persisted after giving, as givers derived more enjoyment from the receivers’ display of affective reactions.

Nonetheless, we do not wish to attribute all underappreciated gift choices to the smile-seeking motive. Bad gifts can occur due to obvious carelessness (e.g., candies for a diabetic patient), outright selfishness (e.g., a vacuum cleaner for a romantic partner), or mere lack of information. Also different from the smile-seeking motive, some gift choices may be instead guided by motives to form character or endow assets instead (e.g., parents giving educational materials or funds to children as birthday gifts).

Our findings have implications for research on gift-giving and interpersonal decision-making. In particular, our findings call into question prior assumptions that people making interpersonal choices primarily intend to maximize receiver satisfaction, and that others’ affective reactions are mere behavioral consequences of their appraisal outcome.

REFERENCES


