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## **Affective Expectations and Uncertainty Orientation: When Do Affective Expectations Stop Influencing Affective Reactions?**

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**ABSTRACT** - The Affective Expectations Model indicates that how much a person thinks they will enjoy an experience (affective expectation) is as important as what actually happens during the experience in determining his or her evaluation of the experience (affective reaction; Wilson, Lisle, Kraft, and Wetzel 1989). Affective expectations may also be used to re-interpret or selectively remember the experience (Klaaren, Hodges, and Wilson 1994). We propose that an individual's approach to uncertain situations may determine the role of affective expectations.

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# Affective Expectations and Uncertainty Orientation: When do Affective Expectations Stop Influencing Affective Reactions?

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## ABSTRACT

The Affective Expectations Model indicates that how much a person *thinks* they will enjoy an experience (affective expectation) is as important as what *actually happens* during the experience in determining his or her evaluation of the experience (affective reaction; Wilson, Lisle, Kraft, and Wetzel 1989). Affective expectations may also be used to re-interpret or selectively remember the experience (Klaaren, Hodges, and Wilson 1994). We propose that an individual's approach to uncertain situations may determine the role of affective expectations.

## AFFECTIVE EXPECTATIONS

Klaaren Hodges, and Wilson (1994) propose three hypotheses to describe the role affective expectations play in an individual's willingness to repeat an activity. According to the *initial effects* hypothesis, the direct role of affective expectations ends with the evaluation of the experience, no additional effect occurs as time passes. The *reinterpretation hypothesis* suggests that people continue to reinterpret aspects of the experience that were inconsistent with expectations. The event becomes more expectation-consistent either by altering the meaning of features of the experience or by adjusting the importance of a feature of the experience. Memory for the facts does not change, but the interpretation of the facts does change. According to the *selective memory hypothesis* expectation-inconsistent aspects of the experience are less accessible than expectation-consistent aspects of the experience. Since expectation-consistent memories are more accessible, affective reactions become more expectation-consistent over time. The interpretation of the fact does not change, but the ability to remember the fact does change.

Each of the three explanations is plausible. We assert that the uncertainty orientation of the consumer may determine how, and to what extent, affective expectations influence affective reactions. We propose an uncertainty orientation framework that uses of locus of control to further divide Friedland's (1998) luck versus chance orientations. Friedland found that people consistently attribute outcomes to either luck or chance.

## UNCERTAINTY ORIENTATION

### Luck Orientation

Luck-oriented people pay little attention to probabilities that define the decision problem. They expect carryover from one random or independent event to another. Some luck-oriented people believe that luck is a stable internal force that will influence events in their favour (Darke and Freedman 1997). For example, some people believe they have an advantage betting at the track or playing poker machines because they are lucky. Other luck-oriented people believe luck comes and goes, but it can be detected (Friedland 1998; Wagenaar 1989). For example, if something goes well in the morning, it is an indication of a lucky day. The luck-oriented people that believe outcomes depend on the luck associated with individual involved are luck internals, luck-oriented people that believe that luck is determined by external factors are luck externals.

### Chance Orientation

Chance-oriented people are likely to believe that the outcome will be the same regardless of the person involved. These people also expect that chance will distribute events evenly such that all possible outcomes will occur with equal frequency (Wagenaar 1989; Wagenaar and Keren 1988; Keren 1994; Friedland 1998). Some chance-oriented people believe that there is a pattern to uncertain outcomes: a stability in external probabilistic events. Consequently, they can improve the likelihood of guessing correctly by 'seeing' the pattern. Other chance-oriented people hold the more rational belief that there is no reliable process for predicting the outcome of uncertain events (Darke and Freedman 1997).

### Uncertainty Orientation and Affective Expectations

Luck internals selectively remember events because the outcome is attributable to their own luck status. Chance internals re-interpret events to defend their belief that they skilled at predicting uncertain events. Luck externals believe outcomes can be predicted by the detection of lucky streaks. Since the outcome does not reflect personally on them, expectations will have little effect during or after the experience. Chance externals view the outcome in an uncertain setting as not predictable. They pay more attention to expectation-consistent information because they hope their expectations are met, but that is where the role of expectations ends.

## EMPIRICAL WORK

Participants, 152 undergraduate students, read a story about going to a restaurant. They were given an initial impression of the restaurant (positive or negative). Participants provided their estimates of the likelihood of good service, good food and an enjoyable evening eventuating. The rest of the evening was described to them (positive, negative). Participants were asked three times to provide their evaluations of the events. After the description of the outcome, they were asked whether they would be likely to return to the restaurant, whether they would recommend the restaurant, and to provide their overall evaluation of the experience. Later, participants provided their memory for the overall evaluation and the facts of the experience. Uncertainty orientations were determined with a locus of causality scale and responses to luck/chance scenarios.

## RESULTS

The results indicate that luck internals assimilated expectations into the evaluation of an experience, the likelihood of repeating and recommending an experience. This group changed their affective reactions over time, but not to be expectation-consistent as hypothesised, instead they altered their reaction to the experience to be more positive as time passed, regardless of the information they received before the experience. Correctly predicting the outcome was less important than defending the belief of having the good luck trait. This group selectively remembered expectation-consistent events occurring. The data supports the selective memory hypothesis.

Chance internals were the only group to shift their affective reactions over time to be more consistent with their initial expecta-

tions. This was expected because it allows them to assure themselves that they are skilled at using the signs to predict the pattern of chance outcomes. This group also reinterpreted the events to be more consistent with their expectations.

Chance externals assimilated expectations into the evaluation of an experience and their intention to recommend the restaurant to friends. Chance externals had the most accurate memory for the service encounter and memory for their evaluation of it. The data supports the initial effects explanation.

Luck externals did show some evidence of reinterpretation. Since this group is concerned with predicting when a good or bad streak of luck will begin or end, they may have re-interpreted the events to be consistent with their initial detection of luck.

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