**The Effect of Money Priming on Consumers' Choice**

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This research shows that a feeling of autonomy may alter how money-primed people respond to social influences and the subsequent decisions. Two experiments demonstrated that the reactance caused by money reminders can be weakened by giving choosers a sense of freedom in decision-making.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Previous research has revealed the significance of money cues on people's behaviors and thoughts in diverse domains: People primed with money, compared with the control participants, persisted longer before requesting others' help, reduced their time or money for others, and preferred to work or play alone (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006). Reminders of money also alleviate people's social distress and physical pain (Zhou, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2009). One recent investigation highlighted that reminders of money also influence how people would respond to social influence attempts (Liu, Smeesters, & Vohs, 2012). Liu et al. (2012) demonstrated that people subtly primed with money did not conform to recommendation because they perceived social influence as a threat to their autonomy. Building on this investigation in the psychology of money, we propose that the effect of money priming on persuasion can be moderated by the degree of freedom in one's choice. Those who are reminded of money are likely to react to the social influence and behave in opposition to the agent's intent. We predict that suggesting an opinion with some degree of decisional freedom, such as a recommendation for a subcategory or a group, would mitigate the effect of money priming. Because recommending a subcategory of a category provides a certain amount of freedom in decision-making, it would not necessarily lead people to feel social influence as a threat. Hence, people who receive a subcategory recommendation are more likely to conform or comply with the opinion, even if they are money-primed.

We conducted two experiments to test this hypothesis. In Experiment 1, participants were told that they would be involved in two unrelated studies. The first task was introduced as a survey. Through this procedure, we primed the concept of money or non-money (control group) by employing two different questionnaires: In the money priming condition, participants were told to estimate the appropriate amount of money in each hypothetical situation, and in the non-money-priming condition, participants were told to decide how much time they would spend with others such as loved ones and family.

Participants then carry out the second task, reading about a situation in which they imagined that they had to decide which coffee beans to purchase. We manipulated each subcategory to include two products. There were two subcategories (i.e. a coffee bean's geographical region; 1) Africa and 2) Central America) and four products (i.e. a fictitious product; 1) Semplice, 2) Appassionato, 3) Grazioso, and 4) Vivace). 'Semplice' and 'Appassionato' belonged to the subcategory of 'Africa,' and 'Grazioso' and 'Vivace' were in the 'Central America' subcategory.

Participants then received either a recommendation for a subcategory (i.e. Central America) or a recommendation for a product (i.e. Grazioso) from a seemingly influential source of knowledge and experience (i.e., a power blogger). The degree of freedom in one's choice was manipulated via different types of recommendations for purchase; the subcategory recommendation was employed as a manipulation of high-level of freedom because people could still choose what they liked even after being given a recommendation. However, the product recommendation was deemed as a social influence with a low-level of freedom because the recommendation explicitly told people what they should select. Finally, we measured which option money-primed and non-money-primed participants chose.

Eighty-seven undergraduates and MBA students (44 males, 43 females) participated in Experiment 1 in exchange for course credits. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (prime: money vs. non-money) x 2 (recommendation: subcategory vs. product) between-subjects design. The results of experiment 1replicated previous finding that reminders of money in combination with product recommendation (i.e., low-level of choice freedom) would elicit reactance in participants' choice. However, when the recommendation was a subcategory, participants were more likely to follow the expert's recommendation even when participants were primed with money. Participants who were not primed with money followed the expert's recommendation regardless of the type of recommendation.

In experiment 2, we tested whether this phenomenon would exist even with only one product in each subcategory. That is, when choosing a subcategory and choosing a product results in no difference, would consumers still feel reactance from a product recommendation and choose the option not recommended? We named this phenomenon an illusory category effect because there was no substantial difference between choosing a subcategory and choosing a product.

Eighty-six undergraduates participated in experiment 2. Participants were randomly assigned to the same conditions of a 2 (prime: money vs. non-money) x 2 (recommendation: subcategory vs. product) between-subjects design as in experiment 1. The procedure employed in experiment 2 was similar to that of experiment 1, but in this experiment we employed the wine category. We employed two subcategories (i.e. wine's place of origin; 1) Bourgogne in France and 2) Piemonte in Italy) and two products (i.e. wine label; 1) Joseph Drouhin Gevrey Chambertin and 2) Pio Cesare Barolo). As explained above, each subcategory had only one product; Joseph Drouhin Gevrey Chambertin in a category of Bourgogne, France and Pio Cesare Barolo in a category of Piemonte, Italy. Participants then received either a subcategory recommendation (i.e. Piemonte in Italy) or a product recommendation (i.e. Pio cesare Barolo) from an agent (i.e. a manager of the liquor store).

As predicted, the agent's recommendation for a specific product along with the money prime exerted a backfiring effect on participants' final choice and purchase likelihood: When activated by the money cues, an agent's influence attempt decreased the likelihood of choosing the recommended option. Specifically, participants who received a product recommendation tended to choose the option that was not recommended, whereas those who were provided with a subcategory recommendation were not affected by the agent's recommendation. When participants were not primed with money, participants in the subcategory recommendation and the product recommendation condition showed no difference in terms of choice proportion of the recommended option.

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