

The more the better?

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The results of the three manuscripts described in this thesis have significant implications for academics, practitioners and consumers in general. In my research, I have explored how different stimuli in our environment—noticed because they are in line with one’s goal (chapter 2 & 3) or because of their physical salience (chapter 4)—influence consumers’ preferences. Furthermore, I challenge common intuitions and existing theories and hope that this will help consumers to better understand their own behavior. For academics I hope my research gives some food for thought so we can deepen our understanding and knowledge of consumers’ behavior and decision making.

In chapter two my co-authors and I explore a common intuition among consumers and practitioners that considering more experiential visuals (i.e., pictures and previews of a potential hedonic experience such as a vacation) in the purchase process is better. Specifically, in five studies we find that exposing participants to an extensive set of experiential visuals of an upcoming hedonic experience leads to lower purchase intentions for that hedonic experience as opposed to exposing participants to only a limited set. We explain this finding by showing that exposure to an extensive set of experiential visuals satiates consumers on the experience being shown, thereby decreasing intentions to further engage in the actual experience.

Theoretically, the current work contributes to the literature on savoring and satiation. Previous research has demonstrated that savoring increases the actual enjoyment of experiences (Chun et al. 2017), yet we demonstrate that savoring—particularly relatively extensive savoring—satiates consumers on the experience being shown, decreasing consumers’ consumption *intentions*. The latter is especially relevant at the time of deciding whether to further engage in the experience. Furthermore, we complement research in the food domain by demonstrating that satiation even occurs while savoring hedonic experiences (rather than only with tangible food items as in Larsson et al. 2014 and Morewedge et al. 2010) where there is a less direct mapping of perception on the five senses and where perceptions differ greatly across individuals. Moreover, we show the importance of psychological components (i.e., changing flavors of ice-cream while eating) rather than the physiological component (i.e., actually feeling full from the ice-cream) as a driver of satiation. In order to stimulate further research, this research has been presented at international conferences (EMAC Doctoral

Colloquium 2018, La Londe Les Maures 2019, ACR 2020), research seminars (Erasmus LunchClub 2019).

From a societal point of view, we know that consumers have a great need to savor upcoming experiences, and marketers eagerly try to cater those needs. For example, booking.com easily shows 30 pictures per accommodation. Yet, the findings from our research demonstrate that—in an environment where pictures have become ubiquitous—marketers should put more caution to the number of experiential visuals they display on their platforms. Importantly, displaying extensive sets of experiential visuals in the buying process has downstream consequences on booking intentions. Thus, instead of just mindlessly displaying experiential visuals, understanding the consequences of (extensive) exposure to experiential visuals might actually help companies to increase revenues. Furthermore, the current research also makes consumers themselves more aware of the fact that more is not always better. After viewing extensive sets of experiential visuals consumers might decide not to engage in an experience while they initially would have liked to.

In chapter three we study the behavior of financially constrained individuals in an intertemporal decision making context (i.e., choice between a smaller immediate reward and a larger future reward). This research challenges the predominant finding in literature that financially constrained individuals prefer sooner immediate rewards over larger future rewards. Intertemporal choice tasks used in these studies typically offer a choice between receiving a smaller amount in the present versus a larger amount in the future (but nothing in the present). Yet, our findings suggest that this traditional choice paradigm might not be capturing true time preferences of financially constrained individuals but rather reflect a—sometimes necessary—preoccupation with pressing, immediate needs. Specifically, in three studies we show that as long as some immediate payout is guaranteed, financially constrained individuals are as likely as non-constrained individuals to accept a delay for a larger payoff and thus are actually equally capable of making smart, future-proof behavioral decisions. As such, from a theoretical point of view, our findings add nuance to the interpretation of previously documented findings using traditional intertemporal choice tasks. This research has been presented at international conferences (ACR 2020) and is published in the interdisciplinary journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* in order to stimulate further research.

From a societal point of view, the findings provide significant implications for policy makers and financial service companies that help financially constrained individuals with their savings, donations and investment goals. The findings help policy makers and financial service companies to design interventions that will help financially constrained individuals to engage in healthy financial behavior (i.e., making decisions that are more future-oriented). For example, brokerage accounts can offer a small risk-free cash bonus when financially constrained individuals open an investment account and banks can offer an immediate cash bonus when opening a savings account.

In chapter four we investigate how the ambient light in a restaurant can impact the taste intensity of the food being served to the guests. We find that a bright (vs. dim) ambient light in a restaurant increases the perceived taste intensity of the food. Theoretically, the current work contributes to a broad stream of literature investigating how different sensory inputs interact with each other (see Krishna 2012 for a review). We contribute to this stream of literature by showing that a change in a stimulus related to one modality can enhance the perception of a stimulus represented in another modality. More specifically, we contribute to the literature studying the effect of ambient light on taste perception. In contrast to previous research—which mainly focused on the taste intensity of one or a few basic taste attributes in isolation—we focus on *overall* taste intensity perception. This more resembles how we typically eat our lunches or dinners—all consisting of a blend of flavors. Furthermore, we test our hypotheses in an ecologically valid setting (i.e., fine-dining restaurant) and with that we also answer the question put forward by other researchers on whether ambient light is able to impact sensory perception outside an artificial setting (i.e., lab setting). In order to contribute to the academic community, this paper has been published in the March 2021 issue of the scientific journal *Food Quality and Preference*.

From a societal point of view, the findings have significant implications for practitioners (e.g., restaurant owners), but also for consumers (e.g., amateur chefs that like to prepare foods for their friends and family at home). Changing the ambient light does not only change the ambience, but also how food is perceived. Furthermore, as the findings show that ambient light changes the taste experience, it might also offer some tactics to reduce the use of flavor enhancers (i.e., less sugar or salt added to a dish when being under a bright ambient light), which contributes to the health of consumers.

The findings of this research were picked up by the national (i.e., Algemeen Dagblad and radio channels QMusic & Radio 1) and international media (i.e., Fox News, Daily Mail, Telegraph and radio channel RTV 1) in media outlets for professionals (restaurant owners food lovers) as well as general consumers—which enabled us to disseminate our research findings to the society as a whole.