

A surprise for you and me?

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SUMMARY

This dissertation investigates how uncertainty appeals and close others influence hedonic consumption choices and experiences. Chapter 2 shows that uncertainty appeals in form of surprise labels encourage choice. Specifically, surprise labels trigger a heightened level of perceived uncertainty, which—if resolved—entails a rewarding experience of uncertainty resolution. It is this rewarding experience of uncertainty resolution that promotes consumers' expectation of an enjoyable consumption experience and thereby increases their quantity chosen for intended consumption.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that even though consumers expect to enjoy surprise-labeled products more than products without such label, they enjoy the actual consumption experience less, consume less from surprise-labeled products and display a reduced desire to continue consumption. This is because the heightened state of vigilance triggered by surprise labels distorts attention away from the focal consumption experience as consumers intuitively remain alert for new incoming cues that may reveal the actual "surprise" associated with the consumption experience. As a consequence of this heightened state of anticipation, consumers become less immersed in the focal consumption experience and thus, enjoy it less.

Finally, Chapter 4 investigates how choices for close others influence subsequent self-indulgence by the chooser. Our findings suggest that choosers with high power in the relationship with the choice target are more likely to self-indulge after making a healthy choice for a low-power close other. Conversely, choosers with low power in their relationship with the choice target are less likely to self-indulge after making a healthy other-oriented choice.