

Do Consumers Read Prices From Left to Right? Negative Evidence from Eye-Tracking Analysis

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Abstract

A common assumption in the marketing literature is that consumers read prices from left to right, e.g. read the euro part before the cents part. However, research in neuroscience has found that, while people read successive words from left to right, they read the letters in a word simultaneously. Transposing these findings to a pricing context, we propose a conceptual framework in which consumers read the digits in a price simultaneously. We test the resulting hypotheses through an eye-tracking experiment in which respondents either read prices in silence or aloud. We find no evidence that consumers fixate first on the left part rather than on the right part. The first fixation is as likely to be on the cents as on the euro part and its average location is on the decimal comma. Further fixations are equally likely to be on the cents part as on the euro part. Moreover, eye movements between successive fixations are almost as likely to be right-to-left as left-to right.

Keywords: *Price encoding; Numerical cognition; Consumer information processing*

Track: Consumer Behaviour