

New insights into mindful (or mindless) consumption

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Abstract

Prior research suggests that consumption can sometimes be a relatively mindless activity, for example, when little cognitive elaboration is involved in decision-making. Such decisions are often prone to situated factors that reside in the consumption situation itself. Yet, recent developments such as globalization and digitalization have stimulated social discourses that could make people more mindful about their consumption. What new insights on mindless or mindful consumption have been gained? This session brings together four papers that address this under-researched question in different, but complementary ways. The first two papers investigate situated factors of consumption, and they suggest that little cognitive elaboration is one common ground on which situated factors affect consumption. The second two papers, in contrast, examine the effects of recent developments in society and how such macro trends make consumers more prudent in their behavior. In “Consuming regardless of preference: Consumers overestimate the impact of liking on consumption”, Yoon and Meyvis find across several studies of food and entertainment consumption that, although people expect that increased liking of products will result in increased consumption of those products, actual consumption amount is surprisingly insensitive to preferences. The authors propose that consumers’ predictions overweight consumption norms and underweight more mindless drivers of consumption, such as boredom, habit, and usage occasions. Estes and Streicher integrate in “It’s All in the Wrist: Shopping Carts Determine Arm Posture and Affect Purchasing” ergonomics research on handle orientation with psychological research on arm posture to deduce a surprising hypothesis: Standard shopping carts with a horizontal handlebar may decrease purchasing. Two lab experiments and one field experiment show that a novel shopping cart with parallel handgrips significantly increases purchase quantities and spending. The effects suggest that shoppers are generally unaware that situated factors can bias their shopping behavior. Eichinger, Schreier, and van Osselaer show across five studies in “Connecting to Place, People, and Past: How Products Can Make Us Feel Grounded and Why Marketers Should Care” that products can make us feel grounded, providing a feeling of deep emotional rootedness and entrenchment. Feelings of groundedness can increase consumers’ willingness to pay for products. Products convey groundedness by connecting to one’s physical (place), social (people), and/or historic (past) environment, also via marketing mix elements. Kranzbühler, Granulo, Puntoni, and Fuchs investigate in “Consumer perceptions of firms’ offshoring decisions: A social contract perspective” consumer responses to offshoring decisions. When firms decide to lay off workers and offshore their production, consumers often react very negatively, while other reasons for layoffs often produce less extreme reactions. The authors demonstrate across five studies that consumer reactions

towards firms' offshoring decisions can be explained by a perceived social contract violation. Audience members should gain a better understanding of how situated factors can affect consumption, and how awareness of such factors can help consumers in becoming mindful decision-makers. Additionally, audience members should gain insight into recent trends in society and how these trends may lead to prudent consumer behavior.