

No one judges me! The impact of online shopping contexts on indulgent hedonic purchases

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Abstract

In this research, we propose that online shopping contexts, in which consumers are not exposed to the scrutiny of others, may facilitate indulgent hedonic consumption. Across four experimental studies, we show that online shopping increases the value of the hedonic aspects of consumption in consumers' judgments and decisions. Studies 1a and 1b show that consumers in online-shopping contexts perceive (Studies 1a) or remember (Study 1b) products as more hedonic than in offline (in-store) contexts. Study 2 reveals a higher preference for more indulging options when imagining shopping online, while Study 3 demonstrates in a simulated retail scenario that this effect is mediated by consumers' social judgment concerns. We propose then that online shopping contexts may liberate consumers to indulge in hedonic consumptions they might otherwise inhibit in public in-store environments.

Keywords: hedonic consumption, social judgment concerns, offline and online shopping

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