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Los Angeles

The Processing and Evaluation of Experiences

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Management

by

Iñigo Gallo

2013



# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Processing and Evaluation of Experiences

by

Iñigo Gallo

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Sanjay Sood, Chair

I present a framework to explain how experiences are different from products, and how these differences influence consumers' processing and evaluation of experiences versus products, before choice. I define an experience as an event or series of events that a consumer lives through, while a product is a tangible object, kept in one's possession (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Experiences are central to consumers' lives and to businesses, but most consumer research so far has focused on tangible objects, paying less attention to intangibles such as experiences (Carter and Gilovich 2012; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Sun, Tat Keh, and Lee 2012). My framework has two parts. In the first part I suggest that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality and that, as a consequence, experiences are better evaluated through holistic processing rather than analytic processing. In the second part I study how these differences influence consumers' processing and

evaluation of experiences compared to products. I suggest that experiences are evaluated closer to the self, more vividly, and more in the form of narratives.

The dissertation of Iñigo Gallo is approved.

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To my parents, Teresa and Miguel Ángel, to whom

I owe – at least – ninety percent of my happiness.

No dissertation in this world could compensate them

for their dedication to their children. I only hope that

this thesis reflects their hard work as much as mine,

and that it honors their generosity.

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*The Shoe That Allows Me to Just Do It: The implications of framing products as experiences on consumer information search*, in Proceedings for Society of Consumer Psychology Conference, San Antonio, February 2013 (Inigo Gallo, Claudia Townsend)

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*Effective Marketing Spending* (2010), Inigo Gallo and Marijke Wouters, Marketing Science Institute. Summarizes the proceedings of MSI's conference held March 2-3, 2010, in Los Angeles, California. MSI 10-301

*New Art and Science of Branding* (2010), Inigo Gallo and Erika Paulson, Marketing Science Institute, 2010. Summarizes the proceedings of MSI's conference held September 15-16, 2009, in San Francisco, California. MSI 10-300

*Mind the Gap: New Approaches to Understanding Customer Decision-Making* (2009), Inigo Gallo and Dante Pirouz. Marketing Science Institute, 2009. Summarizes the proceedings of MSI's conference held February 10-12, 2009, in San Diego, California. MSI 09-301

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*The shoe that allows me to “Just do it” and what friends say about it: The implications of framing products as experiences on consumer information search*, Society of Consumer Psychology, San Antonio, February 2013 (Inigo Gallo\*, Claudia Townsend).

*Choosing an Experience Over a Product: The Role of Uncertainty, Holistic Processing, and Price Sensitivity*, Association of Consumer Research, Vancouver, October 2012 (Inigo Gallo\*, Sanjay Sood).

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## INTRODUCTION

I present a framework to explain how experiences are different from products, and how these differences influence consumers' processing and evaluation of experiences versus products. I define an experience as an event or series of events that a consumer lives through, while a product is a tangible object, kept in one's possession (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Trips, movies, and restaurants are experiences; laptops, shoes, and jewelry are products. I argue that experiences are unique in certain ways and that, because most of consumer research has focused on products, the current frameworks may need to be adjusted accordingly

The concept of experience is closely associated with that of experience good, which was introduced by Nelson (1970). Experience goods include attributes that cannot be fully evaluated until the purchase and use of the product, while search include attributes for which full information can be acquired prior to purchase. The division of goods into experience versus search has made a significant impact in fields such as economics and marketing, where Nelson's work (1970, 1974) has garnered more than 7,000 citations. Nevertheless, most empirical applications in consumer research have been on the area of use of information, such as how credible is the advertising of experience goods (Calfee and Ford 1988; Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990), or how informative is direct exposure to experience attributes before choice (Hoch 2002; Hoch and Ha 1986; Wright and Lynch 1995). Little empirical research has been carried on the viability of the experience concept or has continued to explore fundamental differences between experiences and products (Klein 1998; Wright and Lynch 1995).

On the other hand, during the last decade social psychology has been paying increasing attention to experiential, intangible purchases (Carter and Gilovich 2012; Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson 2011; Van Boven 2005). Most of this work has centered on the claim that, if disposable income is available, experiential purchases are better than material purchases at advancing happiness (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). In investigating the reasons behind this effect, social psychologists have identified a number of differences between experiences and products. For instance, consumers perceive their past experiences to be a more important part of the self and more self-definitional than their possessions (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Also, experiences more than products bring consumers closer to other people and have a stronger social value (Caprariello and Reis 2013). This stream of research therefore finds that experiences are central for consumers, and that there are important differences between experiences and products in the *consequences* of consumption. Nevertheless, it has remained silent on the differences in the *characteristics* of the goods – which was the base of Nelson’s categorization – and on how these characteristics influence choice behavior. This is the twofold contribution of my research.

In the first part of my framework I provide a thorough understanding of the fundamental differences between experiences and products. Specifically, I suggest that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality and that, as a consequence, experiences are better evaluated through holistic processing rather than analytic processing. In the second part I study how these differences influence consumers’ processing and evaluation of experiences before consumption, compared to products. I suggest that experiences are evaluated closer to the self, more vividly, and more in the form of narratives.

In the remainder of this introduction I provide reasons for the study of experiences, I compare experiences to other relevant constructs in consumer research, and I briefly review



the key findings on experiences up to date. Next, I present a framework to understand how consumers evaluate experiences differently from products, before consumption. I then look to validate this framework by deriving and testing a number of hypotheses. Finally, I provide a general discussion of the contribution that this research makes for both the theory and the practice of consumer behavior. In this research I choose to use the terms experiences or experiential purchases and products or material purchases. I do this because this is how the more recent research refers to these types of goods, and also because this terminology hinges more than Nelson's on a key difference between experiences and products as I understand them, and that is intangibility.

### **The Relevance of Experiences**

Experiences are worth studying because they constitute a unique category of goods that is relevant for consumers' lives and for businesses (Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Subjects across several studies understand the distinction clearly and note that it is relevant for them. Indeed, consumers perceive that their experiences are closer to their sense of self than their possessions, and are more self-explanatory (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Because experiences are important for individual consumers, they represent an important part of the economy. Indeed, there are many industries for which the main focus is to provide an experience ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Think of hospitality, the show business, or the restaurant industry. Some argue that the future of businesses lies precisely in their capacity to deliver excellent experiences (Pine and Gilmore 1999). In fact, companies and brands are increasingly adopting a marketing strategy whereby they sell products as experiences, focusing not on specific functionalities of the

good but on the experience that surrounds it, on how it feels physically and emotionally to use (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Newman 2012; Schmitt 2011).

Second, experiences are worth studying because previous research in marketing and consumer behavior has mainly focused on tangible objects and products (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Sun et al. 2012). Even if the term *experience* has been used often in previous research, and even if most researchers would recognize that there are important differences between experiential and material purchases, we still do not have a clear understanding of what those differences are, and how they influence evaluation and choice. As evidence of this, recent meta-analyses of central areas of consumer research such as price sensitivity (Bijmolt, van Heerde, and Pieters 2005), advertising (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999), or word-of-mouth (WOM) (Berger 2012) do not mention differences between experiences and products.

### **Defining Experiences**

It is important to define what constitutes the object of my research and how it relates to other research programs that use the term *experience*. In line with the recent interest in experiences in the social psychology literature, I define an experience as an event or series of events that a consumer lives through, while a product is a tangible object, kept in one's possession (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). One purchases an experience to *do* and a material possession to *have* (Carter and Gilovich 2012). This categorization, like Nelson's division of goods between experience and search, is based on fundamental or *internal* differences in the characteristics of the goods, not on *external* differences such as buyers' perceptions. Intangibility is a key component of experiences. Intangibility is also central to

services, which is another fundamental category in consumer research (Zeithaml 1981). While it is true that many experiences are part of the service industry (restaurants, hotels), others are not (movies, music). On the other hand, there are many services that do not constitute a purchase that the consumer lives through. Consider the banking or the healthcare industries, or consider a car repair shop. These all constitute services, but fall out of the definition of experiential purchases as understood in the recent years (Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). In addition to being different from services, experiential purchases are also distinct from other relevant constructs in the consumer research literature, such as product experience, hedonic products or consumption, and experiential marketing.

*Product experience.* This research stream focuses on consumers' interactions with products and what these interactions mean for them. Consumers who interact with a product (through purchase or through physical exposure at a store, for instance) gain important information that improves their evaluation and decision making (Hoch 2002; Hoch and Ha 1986; Smith and Swinyard 1983). If it is an experience that accumulates through repeated purchase or use, it develops into product knowledge or familiarity (Alba and Hutchinson 1987). If on the other hand this experience comes before choice, it can help consumers in their purchasing decisions (Wright and Lynch 1995). For instance, someone who is on the market for a new car will benefit from experiencing it before purchase. Although exposure to the good is helpful virtually always, it will be especially informative for experience attributes, which can only be evaluated through trial or purchase (Nelson 1970). This aspect of the experience construct is certainly useful, but it is clearly different from the object of my research. While this literature conceptualizes experience as product exposure or use, I define it as a type of good.

*Hedonic goods and hedonic consumption.* Hedonic goods are those that “provide for more experiential consumption, fun, pleasure and excitement (designer clothes, sports cars, luxury watches) while utilitarian goods are primarily instrumental and functional (microwaves, minivans, personal computers)” (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). The hedonic versus utilitarian division has been used not only as a way to categorize goods, but more generally as a way to categorize consumption. Hedonic consumption is “facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of product usage experience” (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). This dichotomy has been studied through a vast number of research programs (Alba and Williams 2013). Even if certain similarities can be drawn, I believe the experience/product distinction constitutes a different dichotomy in consumer research. Hedonic goods can be both experiential and material (a 3-day trip as a wedding anniversary gift vs. a piece of jewelry). In turn, utilitarian consumption can also be pursued in the form of an experience and of a product (subscription to a gym vs. standard running shoes) (see appendix 1 for more examples). Additionally, the same good can be hedonic for some consumers under some circumstances and utilitarian for different consumers or the same consumers under different circumstances (Botti and McGill 2010). Because this is not the case for experiences or products, I suggest that these constitute two distinct categorizations.

*Brand experience and experiential marketing.* These refer to brand-related actions and strategies that marketers’ can employ in order to elicit consumer responses, both internal and behavioral. These responses are evoked by stimuli such as the brand’s identity, packaging, or communications (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). This literature proposes five ways in which a brand can provide an experience to a consumer: thinking, feeling, sensing, acting, and relating (Brakus et al. 2009). Another central object of this research is how to create consumer experiences around products (LaSalle and Britton 2003). For instance, an

experiential marketer selling shampoo and shaving cream will not focus on the specific product category but on the consumption situation: grooming in the bathroom (Chazin 2007; Schmitt 1999). While it is true that a brand can engage consumers through different experiential aspects of consumption and that a branding strategy can focus on experiential tactics, this is significantly different from studying consumption opportunities that are in nature experiential. It resembles research on the benefits of being exposed to experiential attributes more than research on purchasing experiential goods.

### **Differences between Experiences and Products**

I believe that past research has found three generalizable differences between experiences and products. I have alluded to these differences before; I now describe them in more detail. One of them – difficulty of evaluation – regards consumer’s assessment *before* choice, while the other two – closeness to the self and contribution to happiness – refer to *consequences* of the choice for the consumer.

*Difficulty of evaluation.* For Nelson, the central aspect of goods that are dominated by experience attributes is the difficulty to assess their quality prior to consumption (Nelson 1970). Generally, it is more difficult to evaluate the quality of an experience before choice than it is to evaluate that of a product. Other researchers after Nelson have theorized on the reasons behind this difficulty of evaluation. One such reason is intangibility (Zeithaml 1981). Many experiential attributes cannot be seen or touched, nor displayed or illustrated, and this makes their evaluation more difficult. The information needed for the evaluation of the experience can only be acquired through purchase, while this is normally not required of goods that have fewer experiential attributes. Intangibility also influences difficulty through

generality, which is the customer's difficulty in precisely defining a particular good (Laroche et al. 2005). Generality makes consumers' cognitive representations of experiences less accurate, and this in turn makes the evaluation more difficult (Finn 1985). As part of my framework I will suggest a third factor behind evaluation difficulty, and that is uncertainty. I will propose that consumers find the evaluation of experiences more uncertain than that of products.

*Closeness to the self.* A second generalizable difference between experiences and products is that experiences are perceived by consumers as closer to the self and more self-definitional. People define themselves more in terms of their experiential purchases than their possessions, literally plotting experiences closer to the self than possessions in a diagram (Carter and Gilovich 2012). This can be due to experiences being able to fulfill psychological needs – which are more central to one's sense of self – while material possessions tend to fulfill basic needs (Howell and Hill 2009). Experiences turn into memories that are autobiographical (Carter and Gilovich 2012), and these memories play an important role in the construction of personal identity (Wilson and Ross 2003). That experiences are closer to the self than possessions is consistent with theories of anthropology suggesting that *doing* versus *having* is a more fundamental aspect of the human being (Yepes and Aranguren 1999).

*Contribution to happiness.* Finally, the third generalizable difference is that, once basic needs are satisfied, consumers derive more happiness from positive experiential purchases than from comparable positive material purchases, (Nicolao et al. 2009; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Research in social psychology has provided two reasons why this may be the case. First, experiences are ordinarily consumed with other people, are more connecting, and this improves one's social life, which is a key condition for wellbeing (Caprariello and Reis 2013; Diener and Seligman 2004). Second, the consumption of experiences is less comparison-based than that of products (Carter and Gilovich 2010).

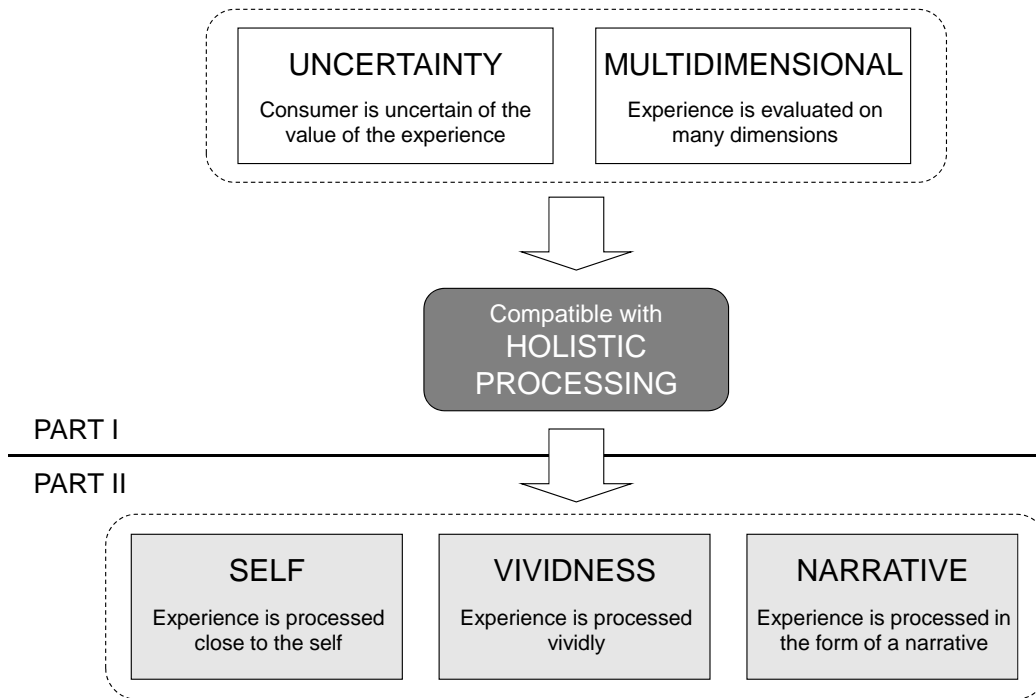
Consequently, the enjoyment one derives from an experiential purchase is less affected by comparisons to other experiences one might have pursued than the enjoyment one derives from a material possession is affected by other possessions one might have acquired.

In summary, while initial research theorized on important differences between experiences and products (difficulty of evaluation, intangibility), more recent research has focused on how the consumption of experiences has different consequences compared to the consumption of products. As a result, we have the confirmation that experiences are central for consumers, but we still do not fully understand how they are different from products, and how these differences influence their evaluation and choice. This is the attempt of the framework that I now provide.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCES BEFORE CONSUMPTION**

I present a framework to understand how consumers evaluate experiences differently from products, prior to consumption. The framework is divided into two parts. In the first part I identify uncertainty and multidimensionality as two characteristics of experiences that influence how consumers process them. In particular, these characteristics make holistic processing more compatible with the evaluation of experiences, compared to analytic processing. In the second part I specify the processing of experiences further by identifying three of its characteristics: closeness to self, vividness, and narrative processing (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Framework for the Evaluation of Experiences



**Part I: Uncertainty, Multidimensionality, and Holistic Processing**

*Uncertainty.* I propose that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty, compared to that of products. Consumers are less certain of their pre-consumption evaluation of experiences such as movies and restaurants than they are of their evaluation of products such as backpacks and laptops. As I have argued, this is one of the reasons why experiences are difficult to evaluate before consumption (Nelson 1970). A consumer needs to purchase the experience in order to be certain of its quality and make an informed evaluation. In contrast, consumers of products might find enough evidence in pre-purchase inspection or even information search. Experiences generally have search qualities that can provide some information before consumption. For instance, prior to purchase, consumers can identify and process several attributes of a movie (budget, rating) or a



restaurant (price range, type of cuisine). Nevertheless, many of these and other important attributes must be “seen, heard, tasted, felt, or smelled to be appreciated properly” (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, p. 134). Attribute intangibility again plays an important role. Without the actual experience, it is difficult for the consumer to imagine and understand these attributes (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996), and therefore to imagine and evaluate the experience.

There are two other reasons why the evaluation of experiences is uncertain. First, experiences, compared to products, have an attribute space that is less useful for judgments (Carter and Gilovich 2010; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Most product attributes are unequivocal and directly interpretable. For a laptop, it is clear what a larger memory or a faster processor mean. On the other hand, the type of menu and the price range of a restaurant are certainly informative attributes, but they are more difficult to interpret and their evaluation is less objective. As a consequence, experience attributes are less helpful for consumers to make an informed decision. Additionally, because experiences are more subjective, many of these attributes are closely associated with emotions, which consumers find challenging to predict (Arnould and Price 1993). Second, since experiences are based on sequences of events more than products, they are naturally exposed to more variations. Consumers recognize that providers of experiences find it more difficult to attain consistency than providers of products, and this increases their uncertainty (Murray and Schlacter 1990; Zeithaml 1981).

My proposition that the evaluation of experiences is uncertain is consistent with past research. For instance, consumers give more credibility to advertising claims regarding search goods than to claims of experience goods (Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990), presumably because consumers correctly interpret the value of advertising for different products, but find this more difficult to do for experiences. Also, the uncertainty of pre-consumption evaluation may be the reason why consumers settle for a satisficing strategy when deciding which

experience to choose among different alternatives, as opposed to using a maximizing strategy for decisions on material purchases (Carter and Gilovich 2010). Finally, I suggest that because the evaluation of experiences is more uncertain, consumers evaluating goods that are dominated by experience attributes online spend on average more time per page than consumers evaluating goods dominated by search attributes (Huang, Lurie, and Mitra 2009). Uncertainty is indeed one of the reasons why consumers spend additional time on decisions (Greenleaf and Lehmann 1995).

*Multidimensionality.* A second characteristic of experiences that influences the way they are processed and evaluated is multidimensionality. I propose that experiences are evaluated on more dimensions than products. It seems intuitive to affirm that – all else equal – there are more elements influencing the value that a movie or a restaurant meal can provide to a consumer, compared to a backpack or a laptop. Past research provides indications that experiences are multidimensional compared to products. Experiential aspects of consumption are multisensorial and carry symbolic meaning (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Experiences are more involving than products; they can engage the consumer at rational, emotional, sensorial, and even spiritual levels (Hoch 2002; LaSalle and Britton 2003). Also, as mentioned, most experiences are based on sequences of events, which by definition include a variety of elements that can influence the overall value of the experience. Again consider a meal at a restaurant: the customer is greeted by an employee; directed to a table; explores the menu and places the order; etc. There are more occasions through which an experience can impact the consumer and provide value. Because experiences can influence consumers through more dimensions than products, consumers' evaluation of experiences is more multidimensional than that of products.

Multidimensionality additionally affects uncertainty in two ways. First, if experiences are evaluated on more dimensions than products, there is then more to be uncertain about.

And second, there is a new source of uncertainty: the uncertainty associated with how to integrate the numerous dimensions to form a judgment about the experience (Urbany, Dickson, and Wilkie 1989).

*Holistic processing.* I propose that – due to uncertainty and multidimensionality – experiences are more likely to be processed holistically, compared to products. While analytic processing entails evaluating objects by attribute, holistic processing evaluates objects as a whole, by alternative (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1988). Several studies show that processing shifts from dimensional or analytic to overall or holistic as the difficulty of the task increases (Bertini, Ofek, and Ariely 2009; Swait and Adamowicz 2001). There are different elements of a decision that increase its complexity and that can be matched to the characteristics of decisions over experiences. For instance, a smaller degree of similarity between alternatives (Johnson 1984; Payne 1982), a larger number of dimensions on which each alternative is evaluated (Meyers-Levy 1991; Russo and Doshier 1983), and an increased uncertainty in the evaluation (Dhar 1997; Punj and Stewart 1983; Shafir and Tversky 1992). In all these circumstances more individuals process the information holistically rather than analytically. A common argument across studies is that, as the complexity of the evaluation task increases, consumers adopt processing strategies that are more realistically applied to the new context, such as overall evaluations (Bertini et al. 2009; Olshavsky 1979). As reviewed, the evaluation of experiences is more uncertain and more difficult than that of products. I propose that, as a consequence, consumers will be more likely to evaluate experiences holistically, compared to products. Also, holistic processing can capture the multidimensionality associated with the evaluation of experiences. This is because it analyzes objects as a whole, takes into account multiple perspectives, and fits decisions in which many relevant factors are important (Nisbett et al. 2001).

I therefore propose that when consumers process experiences holistically they can better deal with the uncertainty that is associated with them, and can better capture their full value. On the other hand, if experiences are processed analytically, consumers will be less able to deal with uncertainty and multidimensionality, and will continue to find the evaluation difficult and not informative. This in turn has interesting consequences, since uncertainty has been found to influence positively the evaluation of items that elicit imagery processing (Lee and Qiu 2009). In fact, consumers frequently enjoy uncertainty as part of the experience (Arnould and Price 1993). As I will explore later, when an experience and a product are evaluated analytically, uncertainty and imagery elaboration can favor the evaluation of the experience over a comparable product and make the experience more persuasive.

This closes the first part of my framework. In this first part I have identified uncertainty and multidimensionality as two central characteristics of experiences that influence how consumers evaluate them prior to purchase. I have also suggested that holistic processing is more compatible with these characteristics and better able to capture the value of experiences, compared to analytic processing. I now turn to the second part of my framework.

## **Part II: Characteristics of the Processing of Experiences**

In this second section I further analyze how the pre-consumption processing of experiences is different from that of products. I propose that while consumers evaluate an experience, the experience is processed as something close to the self, vivid, and in the form of a narrative.

Before justifying each of these characteristics individually, I provide a rationale that is valid to explain all three. In evaluating a new purchase, consumers (1) turn to previous experiences in that same category (LaTour and Peat 1979; Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins 1989); and (2) engage in imagery processing – “seeing themselves in the product” – which is informative because it provides a form of vicarious experience (MacInnis and Price 1987; Petrova and Cialdini 2005). As a result, when the purchase is experiential, consumers look back to previous experiences and try to imagine themselves in the experience. Because experiences, compared to products, are lived (*during* consumption) and remembered (*after* consumption) closer to the self (Carter and Gilovich 2012; Ratner, Zauberger, and Kim 2009), more vividly (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), and more in the form a story (Carter and Gilovich 2012; Shank 1990), these three aspects will influence the processing and evaluation of an experience *before* consumption. When consumers look back to previous experiences or imagine themselves going through an experience, they are looking back to or imagining a purchase that is a more central part of the self, more vivid, and more resembling of a story. Furthermore, I suggest that consumers making a decision on an experience will engage in these two cognitive activities (looking back, imagery processing) more than those making a decision on a product. This is because consumers of experiences have less objective information with which to make the decision (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Nelson 1970) and because it is likely that they already find pleasure and satisfaction in this pre-consumption imagining (Kwortnik and Ross 2007).

I now provide further theoretical grounding for each of the three characteristics of the processing of experiences. Additionally, I identify findings in consumer research that are consistent with each characteristic.

*Self.* As reviewed above, consumers perceive experiences rather than possessions to be more closely associated with the self (Carter and Gilovich 2012). I propose that this

closeness to the self is already present before the consumption of experiences, so that, even during the processing and evaluation, consumers perceive the experience to be proximate to the self and self-definitional. A first reason why experiences may be processed as closer to the self than products is that when consumers make decisions on experiential purchases they are deciding not only where to spend their money, but also where to spend their time.

People's representation of time is associated with emotional, personal meaning, while their representation of money is associated with economic utility (Liu and Aaker 2008). Thinking about time and money is more personal and more relevant for the self than thinking about money alone. Along similar lines, the criteria that consumers use to make decisions on experiential purchases are less utilitarian and more personal than those used to make decisions on material purchases (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The result is that consumers' thoughts and information processing are more connected to the self during the evaluation of an experience than during the evaluation of a product.

A number of findings in consumer behavior can be related to this proposition. First, the processing and planning of an experiential purchase such as a vacation was indeed perceived as relevant for the self and closely connected to self-themes (Arnould and Price 1993; Kwornik and Ross 2007). Similarly, for another experiential purchase (movie), consumers relied more heavily on emotional expectations than on the cognitive assessment of the attributes (Neelamegham and Jain 1999). Also, that experiences are processed as closer to the self may be the reason why consumers see experiences as less interchangeable and more singular than comparable products (Rosenzweig and Gilovich 2012). Finally, my proposition is also consistent with the finding that, for decisions on experiences, consumers rely more on personal sources than on non-personal sources (Bei, Chen, and Widdows 2004; Zeithaml 1981). The rationale is that since consumers consider experiences to be closer to the self, they rely on sources that are in turn closer to the self.

*Vividness.* I propose that when consumers evaluate an experience, the experience is processed more vividly, compared to when consumers evaluate a product. An object or idea is said to be vivid if it is emotionally interesting, concrete and imagery provoking, and proximate in a sensory, temporal, or spatial way (Nisbett and Ross 1980). It is clear that the consumption of experiences matches many of these characteristics. This is mainly because, when consumers undergo an experience, they are holistically involved in it. What I suggest here is that even the processing of experiences before consumption matches these vividness characteristics. The cognitive and sensorial involvement that an experience entails is already influencing consumers' processing and evaluation of it. Experiential aspects of consumption are multisensorial and can engage the consumer at multiple senses and levels (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; LaSalle and Britton 2003); are more affect laden (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007); are more imagery eliciting (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982); and are more proximate to the consumer in a psychological sense (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Another reason why the processing of experiences is more vivid than that of products is that experiences – as I will explore next – lend themselves to be thought of as scripts more than products do. This is important because individuals with well-developed scripts report that their imagery processing is significantly more vivid than individuals without such scripts (Smith, Houston, and Childers 1984). Finally, experiences may be processed more vividly than products out of necessity. Given the difficulty of assessing the quality of the experience before consumption, consumers will value imagery as an informative substitute experience (MacInnis and Price 1987).

Again we can look at findings in consumer behavior research that are consistent with my proposition. For instance, in a study that asked participants to evaluate an experiential purchase (vacation destination), instructions for imagery processing backfired when the picture in the ad lacked vividness (Petrova and Cialdini 2005). Participants in the non-vivid

condition found it difficult to imagine the experience and reported worse attitudes and purchase intentions than those in the vivid condition or those who received no instructions. In another study, participants were asked to report their certainty on the performance of a good that was either dominated by experiential attributes or by search attributes. Those evaluating the experience good reported to be more certain when the ad was more vivid (i.e., it included a picture), while those evaluating the search good were not influenced by ad vividness (Weathers, Sharma, and Wood 2007). That vividness helped the evaluation of an experience but not that of a product supports my proposition that experiences are processed more vividly than products.

*Narrative.* Finally, I propose that when consumers process an experience before consumption, they are more likely to do so in the form of a narrative, compared to when they process a product. Experiences naturally lend themselves to be thought of as stories. Indeed, experiences have the two elements necessary for constructing a narrative: a sequence of events in time (temporality), and the inclusion of decisions that trigger specific consequences (causality) (Escalas 2004). Consider a trip or a meal at a restaurant. These and most other experiences consist of a number of parts structured sequentially through time; and in these experiences consumers can see themselves and others as individuals making decisions that carry specific consequences. These encounters facilitate the representation of narratives (Arnould and Price 1993). Furthermore, that experiences are more imagery eliciting and more vivid helps in the generation of narratives and in the narrative transportation to those stories (Busselle and Bilandzic 2011; Green and Brock 2000).

There are findings in consumer research that are consistent with my proposition. Much of consumers' satisfaction of an experiential purchase such as a day at a theme park comes from the overall experience being consistent with consumers' cultural narratives (Durgee, Holbrook, and Sherry 1991). Also, in a study of movie sequels, participants



revealed a reversal of the traditional brand extension model such that dissimilar extensions were rated better than similar extensions (Sood and Drèze 2006). In line with my proposition I suggest that consumers are already processing the experience as a narrative, and while they expect consistency between the extension and the initial movie, no one wants two stories that are too close to each other. Finally, advertisements for vacation destinations were evaluated more favorably when the information was described sequentially than when it was provided in a disorganized fashion (Adaval and Wyer 1998). Presenting attribute information in a way that impedes narrative transportation is especially harmful for experiences.

This closes the second part of my framework. In order to test and validate this framework I now derive a number of hypotheses from each of the elements and test those hypotheses through a set of studies.

## **PART I – UNCERTAINTY, MULTIDIMENSIONALITY, AND PROCESSING STYLE**

I have claimed that the evaluation of experiences, compared to that of products, is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality. I test these claims by studying the value of additional information on a decision regarding an experience versus one regarding a product. Overall, I propose that due to uncertainty and multidimensionality, consumers will find additional information less useful for experiences than for products.

## STUDY 1

I test for uncertainty by studying whether consumers' confidence in their capacity to make a decision increases when they have access to more information (Sun et al. 2012). I propose that when consumers evaluating an experience access additional information they will not be more confident of their capacity to make a good decision. This is because the experience attributes are more difficult to imagine and their evaluation is more uncertain and because consumers will feel uncertain about how to integrate the additional information available in order to make a judgment. On the other hand, and in line with previous research, consumers evaluating a product will find additional information useful (Mukherjee and Hoyer 2001). They will feel more confident and will find the product better explained. In order to make a strong test of my theory and rule out alternative explanations, I present participants the same good (a 3D-TV), and manipulate its frame to focus on its characteristics as either a product or an experience (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Formally:

H1: There will be an interaction between the type of frame (experience or product) and the amount of accessible information on participants' confidence in having enough information to make a good decision. When participants evaluate the good framed as a product, an increase in the amount of information will make them more confident. When participants evaluate the good framed as an experience, an increase in the amount of information will not make them more confident.

Regarding multidimensionality, I propose that when consumers evaluating an experience have access to additional information, they will not perceive that the experience is better explained, compared to consumers evaluating a product. This is because if experiences

are multidimensional – evaluated on more attributes than products – a given level of information should explain more of the product than of the experience. For the experience, there will be a bigger part left unexplained.

H2: There will be an interaction between the type of frame (experience or product) and the amount of accessible information on perceptions of the explanatory power of that information. When participants evaluate a good framed as a product, an increase in the amount of information will increase the perceived explanatory power of that information. When participants evaluate a good framed as an experience, an increase in the amount of information will not increase perceptions of explanatory power.

Additionally, I test the proposition that experiences are evaluated in more dimensions than products by directly asking consumers to list the important attributes in a decision regarding an experience versus one regarding a product.

H3: When asked to list what attributes should be considered in a purchasing decision, those evaluating a good framed as an experience will list more attributes than those evaluating the same good framed as a product.

## **STUDY 1A**

Study 1A is designed to find evidence in support of uncertainty and multidimensionality as two characteristics of the evaluation of experiences. I have proposed that consumers evaluating an experience will not find additional information useful, compared to those evaluating a product.

## Method

*Participants and design.* Two-hundred and twenty (220) UCLA students and employees (59% female) were recruited online for monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. This was a 2 (frame: product or experience) x 2 (level of information: three or seven attributes) between subjects design.

*Stimuli.* Participants were asked to consider buying a new 3-D TV. The description led participants to think about the TV as either an experiential purchase (e.g., what it would be like to watch television in a whole new way, how it would fit with other activities) or a material possession (e.g., where it would go in their home, how well it would go with their other possessions) (Carter and Gilovich 2012).

*Procedure.* After being exposed to the stimuli, participants were asked “what attributes do you think are important when making a decision on a 3D TV?” Depending on the condition, participants were instructed to “list a minimum of three (seven) attributes.” After listing the attributes, participants were asked to rank them and to “imagine you want to choose a 3D TV and you only have information on the three (seven) top attributes. There is no other information you can access.” Finally, I included the two dependent variables. First, I asked participants to rate from 1 (not confident at all) to 7 (very confident) “how confident are you that you can make a good decision by using only information about these three (seven) attributes?” This was the measure for uncertainty. Second, I asked participants to rate “from 0 (nothing) to 100 (everything), how much of the 3D TV do you think these three (seven) attributes explain?” This was the measure for explanatory power, which is related to multidimensionality.

## Results

As expected, a 2 (frame) x 2 (level of information) ANOVA reveals a significant interaction on both confidence ( $F(1, 217) = 4.77, p < .05$ ) and product explanation ( $F(1, 217) = 4.11, p < .05$ ), see figures 2A and 2B. Preplanned contrasts support hypotheses 1 and 2. Regarding confidence, an increase in the level of information makes participants significantly more confident when deciding on the product-framed good ( $M_{\text{less information}} = 4.80$  vs.  $M_{\text{more information}} = 5.56; F(1, 109) = 7.39, p < .01$ ), but does not affect their confidence when deciding on the experience-framed good ( $M_{\text{less information}} = 5.24$  vs.  $M_{\text{more information}} = 5.16; F(1, 108) = 0.08, p > .10$ ). Regarding how much the information helps explain the good, participants report finding the product-framed good significantly more explained when they have access to more information ( $M_{\text{less information}} = 65.50$  vs.  $M_{\text{more information}} = 74.89; F(1, 109) = 6.21, p < .05$ ), while they report finding the experience-framed good equally explained regardless of the amount of information ( $M_{\text{less information}} = 68.69$  vs.  $M_{\text{more information}} = 66.68; F(1, 108) = 0.19, p > .10$ ). Finally, among participants in the high level of information condition, those deciding on the product find that the product is significantly more explained than those deciding on the experience ( $M_{\text{product}} = 74.89$  vs.  $M_{\text{experience}} = 66.68; F(1, 108) = 4.31, p < .05$ ). No other differences are significant.

--- Insert figures 2A and 2B here ---

Before directly testing for multidimensionality I address an alternative explanation to the interactions reported here. It is possible that participants in the experience condition provided attributes that were less relevant, compared to those in the product condition. This

could be because they find it difficult to list seven important attributes for an experience. As a consequence, when they access more information, they are less confident and find the information less useful, since the information is of low relevance. In order to rule out this alternative explanation, a coder, blind to my hypotheses, reviewed all the attributes and coded them in terms of relevance from 0 (not very relevant; e.g., home delivery) to 3 (very relevant; e.g., price or image quality). Those in the experience condition provide attributes that are equally relevant compared to those in the product condition ( $M_{\text{experience}} = 1.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{product}} = 1.79$ ;  $F(1, 219) = 1.34, p > .10$ ). On the other hand, in line with previous research there is a significant effect of degree of information, such that participants in the high degree of information condition list attributes that are on average less relevant, compared to those in the small degree of information condition ( $M_{\text{less information}} = 1.85$  vs.  $M_{\text{more information}} = 1.66$ ;  $F(1, 219) = 9.24, p < .01$ ). This degree of information effect is not different across the experience/product conditions. I conclude that the differences in decision confidence and explanatory power reported above are only a consequence of the framing of the good as either a product or an experience.

## STUDY 1B

Study 1B directly tests the claim that consumers view experiences as more multidimensional than products. I test whether consumers think that more attributes are needed to make a decision on an experience than to make a decision on a product.

### Method

*Participants and design.* Ninety eight (98) UCLA students participated in this study for a monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: experience-framed good or product-framed good.

*Procedure.* Participants were asked to consider buying a 3D-TV, which was framed as an experience or a product (from study 1A). They were asked to list the attributes they considered important in this decision. This was the dependent variable.

## **Results**

Pre-planned contrasts provide support for hypothesis 3. Participants in the experience condition list more attributes than those in the product condition ( $M_{\text{experience}} = 5.90$  vs.  $M_{\text{product}} = 4.78$ ;  $F(1, 97) = 7.61, p < .01$ ).

## **Discussion**

Results from studies 1A and 1B support the notion that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality. Participants deciding on a product found additional information beneficial, while participants deciding on an experience did not. They were not more confident in their capacity to make a good decision when they had access to more information compared to less. I have proposed that this is because participants struggle to evaluate information on experience attributes and to integrate the additional information to form a judgment. On the other hand, since products have an attribute space that is more objective and better defined, participants consider additional attribute

information useful for products. That the evaluation of the experience is more complex is also supported by the fact that participants evaluating an experience did not consider it to be better explained when they had access to additional information, compared to those evaluating a product. I have claimed that experiences are multidimensional, and therefore a given information level (seven attributes) should explain more about a product than about an experience. Finally, I have also provided supporting evidence for the multidimensionality of experiences by finding that consumers believe that more attributes are needed for a decision on an experience compared to one on a product. The fact that the good under consideration across both studies is the same and that only the framing changed between conditions makes the test stronger and rules out alternative explanations.

Having found support for my propositions that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality, I now test whether this evaluation is also more compatible with holistic processing rather than with analytic processing.

## **STUDY 2**

I have proposed that holistic processing is compatible with the evaluation of experiences because it fits decisions in which (1) there is increased evaluation complexity, and (2) multiple factors are important. I test this proposition in two ways. First, I study whether consumers choose to see information on experiences organized by alternative as opposed to by attribute. Second, I test whether consumers that are primed to process holistically choose an experience over a product more often than consumers who are primed to process analytically.



Holistic processing evaluates options by alternative. This is, multiple attributes of a single alternative are processed before moving to the next item. On the other hand, analytic processing matches evaluation by attribute, where the values of different alternatives on a single attribute are examined before moving to the next attribute (Bettman et al. 1988). I present consumers a decision on either a product or an experience and ask them to select the format in which they want to see the information. If holistic processing is more compatible with experiences than analytic processing, it follows that consumers evaluating an experience will choose to process the information by alternative more than by attribute, compared to consumers evaluating a product.

H4: Participants evaluating experiences will ask to see the detailed information by alternative more than participants evaluating products.

In order to provide a second test for my proposition, I prime participants to process either analytically or holistically and present them with a choice between an experience and a product. I hypothesize that those who process holistically will be better able to capture the full value of the experience, since their processing style is a better fit for complex decisions in which many factors are relevant. As a consequence, they will choose the experience more often than those who process analytically.

H5: In a choice between a product and an experience, participants who are primed to process holistically will choose the experience more often, compared to those primed to process analytically.

## STUDY 2A

This study was designed to test whether consumers choose to process information on experiences by alternative more than they do so for products.

### Method

*Participants and design.* One hundred and sixty (160) UCLA students responded to this survey for monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to the experience or the product condition.

*Stimuli and procedure.* Participants are asked to consider two separate purchases: a weekend trip and a dinner at a restaurant (experience condition); a laptop and a pair of champagne flutes (product condition). Participants are told that there are three alternatives for each purchase, numbered from 1 to 3. They were told that “to make the evaluation process easier, we have created two formats for you to review these options. How would you like to see the information?” I then presented two graphical depictions of the formats in which they could see the additional information. One format was “by alternative”, in which the information is first broken by alternative (package 1, package 2, package 3), and then by attribute (for package 1: destination, flight schedule, hotel description, etc.). The other format was “by attribute”, in which the information is first broken by attribute (destination, flight schedule, etc.), and then by alternative (for destination: package 1, package 2, package 3) (see appendix 2). Finally I asked participants to choose the format in which they wanted to see the information. This was the dependent variable.

## Results

There is a main effect of format of presentation across both conditions. Most participants prefer to see information by alternative ( $p < .001$ ). Consistent with hypothesis 4, pre-planned contrasts confirm that participants evaluating an experience choose to see the information by alternative more often than participants evaluating a product ( $M_{\text{experience}} = 82\%$  vs.  $M_{\text{product}} = 70\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 318) = 4.65, p < .05$ ) (see figure 3).

--- Insert figure 3 here ---

## STUDY 2B

This study tests whether consumers who process holistically choose an experience over a product more often, compared to those who process analytically.

## Method

*Participants and design.* One hundred and seventy five (175) UCLA students (61% female) participated in this study online for a monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to the analytical or the holistic condition.

*Stimuli.* I use the same stimuli from study 2A, with some additional information. The choices were between a “weekend trip to San Francisco, including the flight, the hotel, the

meals and transportation (airport shuttle, cable car, etc.)” or a “new mid-size laptop. Processor: 2.3 GHz, Memory 7 GB, Hard Drive 640 GB, Screen 15.6", Weight: 6.5 lbs.” for \$570 as a gift for a sibling graduating from college, in choice 1; and a “set of two crystal champagne flutes and a champagne cooler with their names engraved” or “taking them out for dinner at a restaurant you think they will enjoy” for \$150 as a parents’ anniversary gift, in choice 2. The order of the presentation of the choices and of the alternatives within the choices was randomized and had no effect.

*Procedure.* Participants first performed a task that primed either analytic or holistic thinking (Monga and John 2008). Participants in both conditions are asked to look at a drawing of a scene which has 11 smaller objects embedded in it. Those in the analytic condition were shown drawings of these objects in a separate panel and were asked to find the embedded objects in the picture. Those in the holistic condition were not told about these objects and were asked to describe the scene, focusing on the background. Finally, participants were presented with the two choice sets sequentially.

## **Results**

As expected, there is a significant main effect of holistic processing on the choice of experiences. Holistic thinkers were more likely to choose the experience compared to analytic thinkers ( $M_{\text{holistic}} = 68\%$ ,  $M_{\text{analytic}} = 49\%$ ;  $X^2(1, N = 154) = 4.89, p < .05$ ) (see figure 4). This is consistent with hypothesis 5.

--- Insert figure 4 here ---

## **Discussion**

Study 2 provides support to my claim that holistic processing is more compatible with experiences, compared to analytic processing. In study 2A, when participants were given the chance to select the format of additional choice information, those making a decision on an experience chose to be given the information by alternative more often than those making a decision on a product. Processing information by alternative is an element of holistic processing (Bettman et al. 1988). Compared to those evaluating a product, participants evaluating an experience feel more comfortable evaluating it as a whole, by alternative. I have claimed that evaluating the experience holistically helps consumers capture their full value, given that experiences are more multidimensional and more uncertain than products. Indeed, in study 2B, subjects who were primed to process holistically chose the experience over the product more often than those primed to process analytically. Taken together, results from study 2 indicate that consumers are naturally more inclined to process experiences holistically before consumption (2A), since this allows them to better capture the full value of the experience, and therefore choose it more often (2B).

Before focusing on the effects of processing experiences analytically, I address an alternative explanation to the results in study 2B. It could be argued that these results correspond to a difference in the degree of vividness in the explanation. The products in the stimuli (particularly the laptop) are indeed described in more detail than the experiences, and this difference may somehow interplay with the processing style. Therefore, I run a follow-up study in which I avoid descriptions of the stimuli. I provide only the name of the good. Additionally, this follow-up study moves away from the gift domain to confirm that this finding is not limited to gifts. Two hundred and sixty four (264) UCLA students were randomly assigned to either the analytical or the holistic condition. I presented three pairs of

stimuli, each pair containing a product and an experience. The three pairs differed in price, but the price was the same within each pair. The stimuli were: high quality speakers or a ticket to a concert (\$50); a comfy desk chair or a ski day (\$75); and a jet printer or a weekend in San Diego (\$150). The order of the pairs and the items within each pair were randomized. As expected, there is a significant main effect of holistic processing on the choice of experiences. Holistic thinkers were more likely to choose the experience than analytic thinkers ( $M_{\text{experience}} = 69\%$ ,  $M_{\text{product}} = 58\%$ ;  $\chi^2(1, N = 791) = 3.93, p < 0.05$ ).

### STUDY 3

I now turn to the consequences of processing experiences analytically. This is necessary because analytic processing is consistent with multi-attribute binary choices in particular (Russo and Doshier 1983; Schkade and Johnson 1989) and with minimization of effort in general (Tversky 1969). To better understand the role of analytic processing in the evaluation of experiences and its comparison with products I introduce two changes in the choice set. First, I analyze the influence of a price increase in a choice between a product and an experience; second, I compare it to the influence of the same price increase in a choice between two products. This will allow me to explore other aspects of experiences compared to products, such as price sensitivity.

I consider two different choice sets (sets comparing a product to an experience, and sets comparing two products), and two different price conditions (same or different price). In a comparison between two products, analytic processing matches the more defined and objective attribute space of the choice set. As a consequence, all else equal and in line with basic economic rationale, an increase in price should shift choice to the less expensive

product. On the other hand, consumers will find comparisons between a product and an experience uncertain and less informative. First, as reviewed, the evaluation of the experience will be associated with uncertainty. Second, the comparison with the product is also problematic, since the items are significantly different in important characteristics (intangible vs. tangible; subjective vs. objective attribute space; etc.) and not directly comparable.

In this choice set I anticipate price to play an important role, since it is the only element in the comparison that is common to both the product and the experience. When the experience is more expensive, I expect price to draw attention towards the experience, which again is the more uncertain item in the choice set. Uncertainty can elicit positive feelings when the expected outcome is positive and likely to be processed through imagery elaboration (Lee and Qiu 2009). Participants who were uncertain about two possible high-imagery prizes (chocolate or candles) reported greater positive feelings than participants who were (a) uncertain about equally attractive but low-imagery prizes (clock or cutlery); or (b) not uncertain at all about the prize. Uncertainty triggered mental simulation of the consumption of the alternatives, so that the easier it was to imagine the alternative, the more positive was the influence of uncertainty. This can be applied to experiences, which are both more uncertain and more imagery evoking than products (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Indeed, uncertainty is frequently a key component of experiences (Arnould and Price 1993). Therefore, I propose that – once the higher price has drawn the attention to the experience – uncertainty and prospect imageability make the experience a more persuasive alternative than the less expensive product. Consequently, consumers choose the experience more often.

Formally:

- H6: There will be an interaction between the type of goods in a choice set (product vs. experience, or product vs. product) and price on choice. In a choice between two products, participants will choose the lower-priced product more

often. In a choice between a product and an experience, participants will choose the higher-priced experience more often.

## STUDY 3A

### Method

*Participants and design.* One hundred and sixty eight (168) UCLA students (58% female) participated in this study online for monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. This was a 2 (choice set: product vs. experience or product vs. product) x 2 (price: same or different) between subjects design.

*Stimuli.* There are two types of choice sets: choices between a product and an experience and choices between two products. Each set in turn contains two consecutive choices. The product versus experience choices are the same from study 2B (laptop vs. weekend trip for \$570; champagne flutes vs. dinner for \$120). In the product versus product choice sets, I keep the products in the sets constant and substitute the experiences with two products (a flat screen TV is paired to the laptop; two personalized chairs are paired to the champagne flutes). I also vary the price of the second good. In the same price condition, both goods are \$570 (choice 1) and \$150 (choice 2). In the different price condition, the price of the second item in the choice set is 120% that of the first (\$696 for the trip to San Francisco or the TV; \$180 for the dinner or the chairs). To clarify, across all conditions one choice item is fixed (laptop, flutes). In the product versus experience conditions the alternative item is an experience (trip, dinner), while in the product versus product conditions the alternative item



is a product (TV, chairs). The order in which the choices and the alternatives within the choices are presented is randomized and has no significant effect.

*Procedure.* Participants performed a task that primes analytic thinking (Monga and John 2008) and were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions: product versus experience same prices; product versus experience different prices; product versus product same prices; product versus product different prices. In each condition participants were asked to make two consecutive choices.

## **Results**

The choice shares across all conditions are shown in figure 5. The vertical axis represents the percentage of participants choosing the alternative or second item in the set (the experience in the product vs. experience choices; the comparable product in the product vs. product choices). Consistent with my hypothesis, the interaction of type of choice set and price is significant ( $F(1, 230) = 13.23, p < .01$ ). Preplanned contrasts in the product versus product set show a significant decrease in the share of the alternative product when its price increases ( $M_{P=P2} = 51\%$  vs.  $M_{P<P2} = 37\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 174) = 4.32, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, in the product versus experience set, the share of the experience increases significantly when its price increases ( $M_{P=E} = 45\%$  vs.  $M_{P<E} = 71\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 158) = 12.10, p < .01$ ). These results support hypothesis 6.

--- Insert figure 5 here ---

## **Discussion**

I have uncovered a surprising difference between the choice of experiences and that of products when participants process information analytically. Consistent with basic economic logic, in a choice between two products, an increase in price led to a decrease in choice. On the other hand, in a choice between an experience and a product, analytic processers choose an experience over a product more often when its price is increased. I have proposed that this effect is based on uncertainty. Consumers find the evaluation of an experience and its comparison to a product uncertain and not informative. In this comparison, a higher price draws the attention to the experience more than to the product. Finally, the uncertainty associated with the experience positively influences its evaluation through prospect imageability. Before testing for evidence of uncertainty as the key mechanism behind this effect, I present a follow-up study that rules out an alternative explanation. I will test for imageability later as I validate the second part of my framework.

I claim that the surprising effect reported in this study is specific to experiences, because experiences are better at advancing happiness and more imagery eliciting, and because their evaluation is associated with uncertainty. Alternatively, it is plausible that this effect is only a consequence of the non-comparability of the elements in the choice set, and that it occurs to whichever item is pricier, whether it is an experience or a product. If this were true, making the product more expensive than the experience should make analytic processers choose the product more often. To test this, one hundred and sixty eight (168) participants were primed to think analytically and were presented with a choice between a product (laptop, flutes) and an experience (trip, dinner). In one condition, the prices within the choices were kept equal; in the other condition, the product was more expensive than the experience. As expected, a more expensive product in the choice set shifted the share towards

the experience, compared to the set in which both the product and the experience were priced the same ( $M_{P=E} = 45\%$  vs.  $M_{P>E} = 61\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 167) = 4.20, p < .05$ ). All else equal, increasing the price of the product in the choice set decreases its share. This result supports my claim that the increase in the share of the more expensive item is unique to experiences.

### STUDY 3B

I now test whether uncertainty is the mechanism behind the counterintuitive positive effect of price on the choice of experiences. I manipulate the level of uncertainty and the price differences, and study their effects on choice. I expect that, in a control choice set where the level of uncertainty is not reduced, consumers will again choose the experience over the product more often when its price increases (hypothesis 6). On the other hand, in a choice set where the level of uncertainty is reduced, I expect this effect to disappear. Consumers will find the comparison easier and informative, and consequently will be less prone to engage in mental imagery (Lee and Qiu 2009). Instead, they will be sensitive to a price increase and will choose the pricier experience less often.

H7: There will be an interaction between the level of uncertainty and price on choice. In a choice between a product and an experience where choice uncertainty has been reduced, participants will choose the higher-priced experience less often. In a choice where uncertainty has not been reduced, participants will choose the higher-priced experience more often.

I manipulate uncertainty by providing an endorsement for each of the two goods in the choice. The endorsement source differs depending on the good. Past research suggests that, when considering an experience, consumers rely more on so-called soft data: information

coming from other consumers; while, when considering a product, they value hard data: information coming from the manufacturer or an independent source such as an expert (Bei et al. 2004; Senecal and Nantel 2004).

## **Method**

*Participants and design.* Two hundred and eighty three (283) students at UCLA (54% female) participated in this survey online for monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. This was a 2 (uncertainty: control or low) x 2 (price: same or different) between subjects design.

*Stimuli and procedure.* The procedure is similar to study 3A. Participants are exposed to the analytic prime and assigned to one of the four conditions. They then choose between a mid-size laptop and a four-day trip. The product price is \$570 across conditions, while the experience is either \$570 or \$696, depending on condition. After reviewing the information on both goods, participants in the low uncertainty condition are provided with an endorsement for each good: an expert endorses the product (“This laptop has been reviewed very favorably by 3 top websites/magazines specialized in technology”), while a friend endorses the experience (“A good friend of yours just bought this same package and has told you that he/she is very happy about having done so”). These endorsements were pretested to be perceived as equally informative ( $M_{\text{Expert}} = 3.70$  vs.  $M_{\text{Friend}} = 4.04$ ;  $F(1, 47) = 0.98, p > .10$ ) and persuasive ( $M_{\text{Expert}} = 4.37$  vs.  $M_{\text{Friend}} = 4.68$ ;  $F(1, 47) = 1.77, p > .10$ ). Participants in the control condition do not see any endorsements. Finally, after participants make their choices, they respond to the manipulation checks. Participants rate the choice task along two dimensions: difficulty (“How easy is it to compare the two options?”) and information (“How

informative – revealing, helpful – is it to compare the two options?”). Both questions are measured on a 7-point scale, from “not at all” to “very much.”

## Results

The choice shares across all conditions are shown in figure 6. The vertical axis represents the percentage of participants choosing the experience.

*Manipulation check.* As predicted, participants in the low uncertainty condition find the comparison easier and more informative than those in the control condition (easier:  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.89$  vs.  $M_{\text{low uncertainty}} = 4.28$ ,  $F(1, 282) = 4.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ; more informative:  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.80$  vs.  $M_{\text{low uncertainty}} = 4.29$ ,  $F(1, 282) = 18.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Hypothesis 7.* As expected, the interaction of price and endorsement type is significant ( $F(1, 279) = 4.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In the control condition, pre-planned contrasts reveal a significant increase in the share of the experience when its price was increased ( $M_{P=E} = 40\%$  vs.  $M_{P<E} = 56\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 149) = 4.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This is consistent with hypothesis 6. On the other hand, in the low uncertainty condition the share of the experience decreases when its price increases, although this difference was not significant ( $M_{P=E} = 52\%$  vs.  $M_{P<E} = 45\%$ ;  $X^2(1, 132) = 0.58$ ,  $p > .10$ ). No other differences are significant.

--- Insert figure 6 here ---

## Discussion

Study 3B strengthens my explanation for the effect in study 3A. In study 3A I found that analytic processors choose an experience more often when its price increases. I proposed that this was a consequence of uncertainty. Analytic processors are uncertain about the comparison between a product and an experience, and uncertainty positively influences their attitude towards the experience through prospect imageability. Study 3B supports this explanation by showing that this effect disappears when the level of uncertainty is reduced. Participants were less uncertain about the evaluation of the experience and its comparison with the product. They found the comparison easier to make and more informative. Consequently, they made their choice according to basic economics: they chose the experience less often when its price increased. As reported, this decrease was not significant. In hindsight, even if the pretest showed a balanced persuasion effect across endorsements, this may be due to the comparatively more powerful effect of recommendations from friends over recommendations from experts. Some past research has indeed indicated that recommendations from friends and family can have a stronger effect than those from experts (Duhan et al. 1997; Brown and Reingen 1987). Regardless, the interaction was significant, supporting my proposition that uncertainty is what drives the different effect of a price increase across products and experiences.

This marks the end of the validation of the first part of my framework. Across several studies I find support for my claims that the evaluation of experiences is associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality. Also, I have shown that holistic processing is more compatible with the evaluation of experiences, compared to analytic processing.

## **PART II – SELF, VIVIDNESS, NARRATIVE**

I now turn to the second part of my framework. I have proposed that as experiences are evaluated before consumption they are processed closer to the self, and in a vivid and narrative way, compared to products.

### **STUDY 4**

Study 4 tests my proposition that experiences are processed closer to the self than possessions. For this, I compare the impact of congruency between the self and a persuasion message for either an experience or a product (Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer 2005).

Theories on self-schemata have predicted that preferences should increase when a consumer's personality is congruent, versus incongruent, with a brand or message (Kassarjian 1971). However intuitive, this premise has received limited support (Kassarjian 1971; Sirgy 1982). Recently, two research programs have been able to support this prediction by further specifying the conditions under which it occurs. On the one hand, Wheeler et al. (2005) argue that when a message matches the self-schemata of a consumer, this will increase consumer's message elaboration. Persuasion will then depend on argument strength, so that strong arguments improve persuasion and weak arguments hamper it. When the message does not match self-schemata, consumers' message elaboration does not increase, and therefore argument strength has no effect. On the other hand, Aaker (1999) argues that the effect of self-schemata matching on attitude change is larger for individuals who are low in self-monitoring. For those who are high in self-monitoring, self-schemata matching has a smaller influence or no influence at all.

Here I suggest a third condition under which self-schemata matching may have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes: the evaluation of experiences. If it is true that experiences are processed close to the self, then a message that is congruent with self-schemata should trigger more positive attitudes than a non-congruent message. Because the experience is an important part of the self (Carter and Gilovich 2012), the consumer will react positively to a message that is congruent with the self. On the other hand, the effect that self-schemata matching may have on an evaluation of a product is less clear, and – as reviewed – not necessarily positive. In any case, since material possessions are less close to the self than experiences, if there is a positive effect of congruency between the message and the self-schemata, this effect should be smaller in size.

H<sub>8</sub>: There will be an interaction between type of good and congruency on the attitudes towards the good. When consumers evaluate an experience, their attitudes will be better for messages that are congruent with their self-schemata than for messages that are incongruent. On the other hand, when consumers evaluate a product, this will not be the case.

## **Method**

*Overview.* The design and procedure of this study closely resemble those of Wheeler et al. (2005) with few exceptions. The main difference is the personality dimension chosen for self-schema. Wheeler et al. (2005) use extraversion-introversion in study 1 and need for cognition in study 2. I have chosen not to use these since I believe there is the risk that they will interact with the other independent variable, experiential versus material purchase. Experiences are by nature frequently consumed with other people or in a social setting



(Caprariello and Reis 2013), which is conceptually close to the extroversion construct. On the other hand, I have shown in study 2 that experiences are processed holistically, which is a processing style that has been connected to lower scores on the need for cognition scale (Baumgartner 1993). Instead, I focus on impulsivity as a personality trait. Although most consumer research that has studied impulsivity has done so under the prism of impulsive buying behavior (Rook and Fisher 1995), impulsivity is a broad and important personality trait and as such appears in every major system of personality (Eysenck and Eysenck 1977; Whiteside and Lynam 2001).

*Participants.* One hundred and sixty five (165) participants responded to this survey online for a monetary compensation. Participants were recruited through M-Turk.

*Procedure.* Participants were asked to consider and evaluate two separate purchases (either experiences or products, described below). For each purchase, participants saw an advertisement message. Depending on the condition, the introductory and the final sentences in the message described the purchase in a cautious frame (introductory: “I bet you’re the type of person who makes cautious decisions, non-arbitrary, thoughtful. You get a thorough sense of what can be a good option and only then you go for it”; final: “When you carefully consider it, this CD collection is a great choice!”) or in an impulsive frame (introductory: “I bet you’re the type of person who makes quick decisions, dynamic, spontaneous. You get a quick sense of what can be a good option and you go for it”; final: “No need to linger on this for too long, this CD collection is a great choice!”). Next, participants rated their attitudes towards the good in terms of attractiveness and desirability (7 point scale from “not at all” to “very much”) and their intentions to purchase and to recommend (7 point scale from “very unlikely” to “very likely”). Participants then moved to the second good, for which the procedure was identical.

After evaluating these two possible purchases, participants were exposed to a filler task. After the filler task, they completed the impulsivity questionnaire from Eysenck et al. (1985). This consists of 19 yes/no questions, with items such as “Do you often do things on the spur of the moment?”, or “Do you prefer to "sleep on it" before making decisions?” Finally, and in order to confirm that the stimuli did not vary in important dimensions other than their experiential or material nature, I asked participants to rate the goods evaluated in terms of how hedonic (7 point scale from “not associated with feelings” to “very associated with feelings” from Shiv and Huber [2000]) and how important they considered them (7 point scale from “not important” to “very important”).

*Stimuli.* I designed two versions of two different purchase opportunities. The first pair of purchases was related to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the second was a gift for an older relative who is supposedly a horse racing fan. For the novel, those in the experience condition were asked to evaluate “A ticket to a talk by Mary Badham, the girl who played Scout Finch in the Oscar-winning movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* (...)”; while those in the product condition read “This is a new anniversary edition of the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* (...)” For the gift related to horse-racing, those in the experience condition were asked to consider “A pair of tickets to the Oak Tree Derby, which takes place around the same time as the birthday (...)”; while those in the product condition read “This is a framing of an original ticket to the 1938 (the year your relative was born) San Juan Capistrano Handicap (...)” By choosing experiences and products that are closely comparable I can provide a tighter experimental setting and control for alternative explanations (see full stimuli in appendix 3).

## **Results**

*Control variables.* All stimulus were considered equally hedonic ( $F(1, 326) = .11, p > .10$ ) and equally important ( $F(1, 326) = .89, p > .10$ ). More importantly, the frame of the message did not influence these measures (hedonic:  $F(1, 328) = .16, p > .10$ ; important:  $F(1, 328) = .85, p > .10$ ).

*Effect of message frame on impulsivity scores.* One concern with this procedure is that, even if participants completed a filler task after the manipulation and before they responded to the impulsivity scale, the frame may have biased participants' response to the scale. Nevertheless, participants' responses to the scale were not influenced by the frame of the message they read ( $M_{\text{impulsive}} = 1.69$  vs.  $M_{\text{cautious}} = 1.72$ ;  $t(1, 328) = .96, p = .34$ ).

*Congruency between message frame and impulsivity.* Following Wheeler et al. (2005), given that the impulsivity scores are significantly skewed towards cautiousness ( $p < .001$ ), I perform a tertiary split, and I label the thirds as high-cautious, moderate-cautious, and low-cautious. I then create three groups, according to congruency between message frame and self-reported impulsivity scores. The non-congruent condition contains participants that rated themselves as high-cautious and were exposed to the impulsive frame, and participants who rated themselves as low-cautious and were exposed to the cautious frame. The congruent condition contains low-cautious who saw the impulsive frame and high-cautious who saw the cautious frame. Finally, the middle condition (between congruent and non-congruent) contains all those who rated themselves as moderate-cautious.

*Attitudes and behavioral intentions.* The four dependent variables (two scores on attitudes and two on behavioral intentions) were highly correlated ( $\alpha = .88$ ). To simplify presentation and to provide a more reliable measure of participants' reactions I compute an overall index. As expected, there is a significant interaction between congruency and type of good on participants' reactions to the ads ( $F(2, 324) = 3.02, p < .05$ ) (see figure 7). I focus only on the congruent versus non-congruent scores. Preplanned contrasts confirmed that the

two experiences elicit more positive attitudes and purchase intentions when the message is congruent with the impulsivity self-schema than when it is not ( $M_{\text{non-congruent}} = 5.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{congruent}} = 5.63$ ,  $F(1, 99) = 4.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ). On the other hand, reactions towards the two products were marginally worse in the congruent condition than in the non-congruent condition ( $M_{\text{non-congruent}} = 5.10$  vs.  $M_{\text{congruent}} = 4.70$ ,  $F(1, 108) = 3.56$ ,  $p < .10$ ).

--- Insert figure 7 here ---

## **Discussion**

As predicted, consumers have better attitudes and report better behavioral intentions for an experience that is framed as congruent with an important personality trait than for one that is framed as non-congruent. On the other hand, this was not the case for products. This result is consistent with my proposition that consumers process experiences closer to the self than products before consumption. Because the experience is seen as more proximate and more relevant for the self, the congruency between the message and the self has a more positive effect than in the case of the product. The possibility of alternative explanations is limited by the fact that the experience and the product within each pair of stimulus are very closely related to each other, and that participants considered all goods equally hedonic and important.

While I predicted the interaction, I did not propose a specific direction for the results regarding the products. This is because previous research on congruency between self-schemata and persuasive messages has not yielded a consistent result (Aaker 1999). Results above show that congruency between the message and the self has a marginally negative

effect on participants' reactions towards the product. This result is somewhat surprising. Why would congruency hurt the evaluation of a material possession, even if only marginally? It may be related to consumers not wanting to look materialistic, since materialism has negative associations (Van Boven 2005). Perhaps when the possession is congruent with the self consumers become more aware of the materialistic nature of what they are evaluating and this triggers a negative reaction towards the product.

Next, I test my proposition that experiences are perceived more vividly than products while they are being processed before consumption. I do this by looking at the impact that imagining the satisfaction that comes with the consumption of the good brings for an experience versus for a product.

## **STUDY 5**

Vividness has been shown to influence persuasion positively (MacInnis and Price 1987; Petrova and Cialdini 2005). If experiences are processed more vividly than products, then it follows that imagining consumption should have a more positive effect on consumers' evaluations of experiences than on their evaluations of products. I test this by asking participants to anticipate satisfaction of either an experiential or a material purchase, and comparing this to a second condition in which I ask participants simply to choose. Previous research uses the former as a mechanism to stimulate mental imagery and the latter as a mechanism to hamper it (Shiv and Huber 2000). I predict that imagining consumption will have a positive impact on the evaluation of the experience, so that the experience will be more persuasive in the imagination condition compared to the choice condition. On the other hand, imagining consumption will have no effect on the product. This is because the

experience is processed more vividly than the product, and vividness has a positive influence on persuasion.

H10: There will be an interaction between task (instructions to imagine vs. choice) and type of good (experience vs. product) on attitude towards the good.

Instructions to anticipate satisfaction will make the experience more attractive while it will have no effect on the evaluation of the product.

## **Method**

*Participants and design.* One hundred and eighty one (181) participants responded to this survey online for a monetary compensation. Participants were recruited through M-Turk and were randomly assigned to the choice condition or the anticipation of satisfaction condition.

*Stimuli.* I presented participants with four consecutive choices, all between a product and an experience. I used the two choices from study 4 and added two additional pairs of stimulus. In one, participants were asked to “think about a movie of which you are a big fan. It has to be at least 10 years old” and then evaluated the following two alternatives: “(a) Signed original poster (...), or (b) Movie screening plus producer presentation (...).” In the other choice, participants were asked to “imagine you are thinking about spending some money on yourself. Further imagine you really like classic rock” and then evaluated the following two alternatives: “(a) Concert (...), or (b) “Ultimate CD collection (...)” (see appendix 3 for full stimuli). I pretested (n = 36) the two alternatives within all four choices so that each pair was perceived as equally attractive, equally hedonic/utilitarian, and equally important for participants.

*Procedure.* Participants in the choice condition were asked to “evaluate the following two alternatives carefully and make your choice.” Participants in the anticipating satisfaction condition were asked to “take a moment to really imagine what the options would be like” and rated both alternatives along different dimensions such as satisfaction or happiness (Shiv and Huber 2000). This was intended to facilitate their imagination. Finally, respondents across conditions rated each alternative on a 7-point scale from “not attractive” to “attractive”. This served as the dependent variable.

## **Results**

As expected, the interaction of type of good (experience vs. product) and type of task (choice vs. anticipation of satisfaction) is significant ( $F(1, 751) = 4.12, p < .05$ ) (see figure 8). This is consistent with hypothesis 10. Pre-planned contrasts confirmed that participants perceive the products in the choice set to be equally attractive regardless of condition ( $M_{\text{choice}} = 5.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{anticipate satisfaction}} = 5.36; F(1, 375) = .009, p > .10$ ), while, on the other hand, they perceive the experiences as more attractive when they are asked to anticipate satisfaction than when they are asked to choose ( $M_{\text{choice}} = 5.09$  vs.  $M_{\text{anticipate satisfaction}} = 5.57; F(1, 375) = 6.82, p < .01$ ). No other differences were significant.

--- Insert figure 8 here ---

## **Discussion**

By finding that product imageability positively affects experiences, study 5 provides supporting evidence for my claim that consumers process experiences more vividly than products. Participants who engage in imagery elaboration while evaluating an experience report finding the experience more attractive than participants who do not engage in imagery elaboration. On the other hand, engaging in imagery elaboration had no effect in the evaluation of the products. This finding is especially interesting considering that experiences – because they are intangible – are normally thought of as more abstract than a material counterpart. My results complement those in Petrova and Cialdini (2005). There, instructions to transport into an ad promoting an experience backfired when the image was not vivid. While my results show that imagining an experience is more persuasive than imagining a product, their results indicate that for this imagination to be persuasive, the information on the experience needs to be vivid.

This study also provides support for my explanation of the effect in study 3. There I proposed that uncertainty positively influences alternatives that are pleasant to imagine. Here I find that, indeed, when consumers process information about an experience by way of anticipating the satisfaction they would derive from it, they find it more attractive than a product. This study then completes the explanation that I provide for the counterintuitive interaction in study 3.

I now turn to the last element in my framework: experiences are more likely to be processed in a narrative fashion, compared to products. This is because experiences contain the two elements needed for a narrative: a sequence of events that evolves over time, and causality (Escalas 2004).



## STUDY 6

If experiences are processed as narratives, then it is useful to turn to research on narratives to identify the characteristics of a persuasive story. One such condition is consistency among the narrative elements (McKee 1997). Narrative consistency is the degree to which a story and its elements are judged to be congruent and coherent, without contradictions (Hall 2003). Consistency among narrative elements positively affects perceived realism, which in turn influences the persuasion of the narrative (Cho, Shen, and Wilson 2012). The different elements of a narrative have to be consistent in order to create meaning and be persuasive. I propose that this can be translated to the advertising of experiences. Particularly, I analyze print advertising. Previous research has already studied print ads as narratives (Phillips and McQuarrie 2010). Under this prism, the elements of the ad can be considered as the elements of a narrative. Then, just like the elements of a narrative need to be consistent to be persuasive, I hypothesize that the different elements within an ad of an experience need to be consistent in order for the ad to be persuasive. On the other hand, because products are less likely to be processed in the form of narratives, narrative consistency is less necessary for product ads to be persuasive. I focus on two of the most important elements of a print ad: picture and copy. I manipulate consistency by making the picture totally consistent with the copy or not.

H11: There will be a significant interaction of type of ad (experience or product) and consistency on participants' attitudes. Consistency in the experience ads will have a positive impact on participants' attitudes, while consistency in the product ads will have no effect.

Narratives persuade through a mechanism called narrative transportation (Green and Brock 2000). Narrative transportation is the phenomenological experience of being immersed in a story. This construct has already been used in consumer research (Escalas 2004; Phillips and McQuarrie 2010; Wang and Calder 2006). For instance, when subjects were asked to imagine themselves using a product in an advertisement, narrative transportation mediated the favorable effect of that mental simulation on attitudes (Escalas 2004). I posit that the interaction predicted in hypothesis 11 is an effect of narrative transportation. If the elements in the ad do not point to a similar narrative (i.e., are not consistent), this prevents the consumer from transporting into the experience, and therefore negatively influences consumers' attitudes towards the experience advertised.

H12: The interaction in H11 will be mediated by narrative transportation.

## **Method**

*Participants and design.* One hundred and sixty three (163) UCLA students participated in this research for a monetary compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. This was a 2 (type of good: experience vs. product) X 2 (consistency: consistent vs. non-consistent) between subjects design.

*Stimuli.* I created ads for two experiences (restaurant, spa) and for two products (running shoes, shampoo). For each good I created two ads by keeping the copy constant and changing the picture to make it either narratively consistent with the copy or not. For instance, the running shoes ad read "Imagine yourself running through this park. Your feet feel remarkably light. You look down and see a pair of Westerley running shoes on your feet (...)" (from Escalas 2007). The consistent picture showed a woman running in a park, while the

non-consistent picture showed a woman stretching in a park, ready to start her run (see appendix 4 for stimulus).

In order to control for all explanations other than narrative consistency, I set a number of conditions for the selection of pictures and pretested all of them with participants from the same demographic as those in the main study. I selected pairs of pictures that fulfilled the same conditions. For instance, both pictures for the running shoes show a full depiction of a female runner and they are both in a non-urban outdoors setting; both pictures for the spa show a relaxed man; etc. I then pretested all four pairs ( $n = 164$ ) to confirm (1) that both pictures within each pair were equally fitting for an ad in that category; and (2) that the consistent stimuli were rated as more consistent than the non-consistent stimuli. In this pretest participants saw one of the two pictures for each category and rated their agreement with the statement “This picture is appropriate for a (name of the category) ad”, on a scale from 1 to 7. Next, they answered to two measures of narrative consistency. First, they answered the question “To what extent do the picture and the text convey the same message?”; finally, they rated their agreement with the statement “The image in the ad is appropriate for the content of the text”. For both measures I provided a 7 point scale, from “very little” to “very much”. Regarding category fit, the pictures within all four pairs were considered equally appropriate for their respective categories (running shoes:  $F(1, 162) = 2.12, p > .10$ ; shampoo:  $F(1, 162) = 1.98, p > .10$ ; spa:  $F(1, 163) = 1.47, p > .10$ ; and restaurant:  $F(1, 162) = 3.02, p > .10$ ). Regarding consistency, the consistent ads were seen as significantly more consistent than the non-consistent ads (I averaged both measures ( $\alpha = .82$ ): running shoes:  $F(1, 162) = 7.69, p < .01$ ; shampoo:  $F(1, 163) = 4.98, p < .05$ ; spa:  $F(1, 163) = 8.03, p < .001$ ; and restaurant:  $F(1, 162) = 6.64, p < .01$ ).

*Procedure.* Participants were first told that they were going to see two ads for two different possible purchases. The order of the ads within each condition was randomized and

had no effect. For each ad, participants were presented with the picture and the copy. The first set of measures on attitudes and intended behavior served as the dependent variables. I asked participants to rate both the good under evaluation and the ad from 0 (“very bad”) to 100 (“very good”). I also asked participants to rate how likely they were to try the good being advertised, and (for the products) how likely they were to buy it. Again the scale ranged from 0 (“definitely will not”) to 100 (“definitely will”).

Next, participants responded to the second set of measures, which was intended to capture the degree to which they immersed into the ad. The three items were selected from the abbreviated transportation scale (Escalas 2007): “I was mentally involved in the ad,” “While thinking about the ad, I could easily picture the events in it taking place,” and “The ad had a beginning, middle, and end.” For all three measures I provided a 7 point scale, from “very little” to “very much”. Finally, participants responded to a manipulation check regarding the classification of goods as experiences or products. Participants read the following: “Think of material purchases as purchases made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is kept in one's possession. Think of experiential purchases as purchases made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one lives through. In your opinion, dinner at a restaurant is...” (from Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). I provided a 7 point scale ranging from “definitively a material possession” to “definitively an experiential purchase”.

## **Results**

*Manipulation check.* As expected, participants classified the restaurant and the spa as more experiential than the running shoes and the shampoo (restaurant and spa:  $M = 5.01$ , running shoes and shampoo:  $M = 2.42$ ;  $F(1, 325) = 9.64, p < .001$ ).

*Attitudes and purchase intentions.* I average the two attitudinal measures with the two behavior measures ( $\alpha = .88$ ). As hypothesized, there is a significant interaction between type of good and consistency, so that consistency improves participants' attitudes and purchase intentions in the experience condition but has no effect in the product condition ( $F(1, 321) = 4.46, p < .05$ ) (see figure 9). Pre-planned contrasts confirm that consistency has a positive effect on the evaluation of the experiences, so that consistent ads are trigger better evaluations than non-consistent ads ( $M_{consistent} = 65.65$  vs.  $M_{non-consistent} = 56.08$ ;  $F(1, 160) = 9.11, p < .01$ ). On the other hand, consistency has no effect on the evaluation of the products ( $M_{consistent} = 58.02$  vs.  $M_{non-consistent} = 58.56$ ;  $F(1, 161) = .04, p > .10$ ). Finally, between the consistent ads, the experience ads trigger significantly better attitudes and purchase intentions than the product ads ( $M_{experience} = 65.65$  vs.  $M_{product} = 58.02$ ;  $F(1, 162) = 6.65, p < .05$ ). No other differences are significant.

*Transportation.* I average the three transportation measures ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). As expected, there is a significant interaction between type of good and consistency, so that consistency facilitated transportation in the experience condition but had no effect in the product condition ( $F(1, 321) = 3.94, p < .05$ ). Pre-planned contrasts reveal that this interaction, like that on attitudes and behaviors, is driven by differences in the experience condition. Participants that evaluated ads of experiences report being significantly more transported when the ad is consistent than when it is not ( $M_{consistent} = 4.58$  vs.  $M_{non-consistent} = 3.46$ ;  $F(1, 160) = 20.71, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, consistency has no effect on transportation for those evaluating a product ( $M_{consistent} = 4.23$  vs.  $M_{non-consistent} = 3.97$ ;  $F(1, 161) = 2.41, p > .10$ ). Finally, between the non-consistent ads, participants evaluating an experience are

significantly less transported than those evaluating a product ( $M_{experience} = 3.46$  vs.  $M_{product} = 3.97$ ;  $F(1, 162) = 3.91, p < .05$ ). No other differences are significant.

*Mediation analysis.* A bootstrapping analysis (Preacher and Hayes 2004; Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010) reveals that the interaction effect of type of good and consistency on attitudes and behaviors is mediated by narrative transportation ( $\beta = -.18, SE = 1.48, 95\%$  confidence interval [CI] = - 8.62 to - 2.91). A multiple regression analysis reveals a significant effect of transportation on attitudes and behaviors after controlling for condition ( $\beta = .45, t = 15.40, p < .001$ ). The effect of the interaction term (type of good and consistency) is not significant ( $\beta = 1.74, t = 1.43, p > .10$ ), suggesting indirect-only mediation.

--- Insert figure 9 here ---

## **Discussion**

Study 6 finds that narrative consistency between the elements of an ad is important for ads of experiences but not for ads of products. For the spa and the restaurant, consistency between the copy and the picture improved participants' attitudes towards the ad and the good and their intentions to try the experience. On the other hand, for the shampoo and the running shoes, consistency had no effect. I have argued that this is because experiences are processed in a narrative fashion, compared to products. Indeed, results show that consistency helped participants immerse and transport themselves into the experience being advertised, but did not influence participants evaluating a product. That narrative consistency matters for the processing of experiences but not for that of products supports my proposition that experiences, more than products, are processed as narratives.

This study contributes to research on advertising in general (discussed below in the general discussion section), and on consistency within the ad in particular. Consistency in advertising has been investigated from several perspectives such as brand extensions (Park, Milberg, and Lawson, 1991), advertising processing (Unnava and Burnkrant 1991), or brand name and logo (Henderson, Giese, and Cote 2004). Although there are several studies that test consistency in print ads, virtually all of them are memory studies testing recall and recognition, as opposed to attitude or likeability, which are the focus of the current research. Across these studies, consistency is understood in a variety of ways: source characteristics of opposing expertise (Karmarkar and Tormala 2009); presence of positive and negative product information (Sengupta and Johar 2002); or congruity of brand extension (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). None of these studies examines consistency as understood in narratives: the different narrative elements should point to a similar story (Hall 2003).

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

I have presented a framework for how experiences are different from products, and how these differences influence the way in which consumers process and evaluate experiences differently from products before choice. Given the recent interest in experiential purchases (Carter and Gilovich 2011; Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson 2011; Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman 2009; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003), and given that most consumer and marketing research so far has disproportionately focused on material purchases (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Sun et al. 2012), this framework is relevant and timely. Across a number of studies, I have provided support for each of the elements within the framework. First, I have uncovered uncertainty and multidimensionality as two important characteristics

of experiences that influence the way in which they are evaluated. Consumers find the evaluation of experiences more difficult and uncertain than that of material possessions. Also, consumers evaluate experiences on more dimensions than products: for an experience, there are more attributes that matter. Next, I have found that holistic processing is more compatible with the evaluation of experiences than analytic processing. This is because holistic processing is more fitting for decisions of increased difficulty and in which many factors are relevant. The second part of my framework builds on these findings and further specifies the differences between the processing of experiences and that of products. In particular, I have identified three differential characteristics of the evaluation of experiences. Before consumption, experiences are processed closer to the self, more vividly, and more in the form of a narrative, compared to products.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

My research contributes to several areas of consumer research. I believe that, most importantly, this research contributes to the consumer research literature by providing a first complete framework to understand how experiences are evaluated and chosen differently from products. Nelson's seminal work uncovered a first key difference between search and experience goods: difficulty of assessing the quality prior to purchase (1970). This represented a key first step in the understanding of differences between experiences and products. Consequently, his categorization of goods into experience or search has been used extensively in consumer research, marketing, and economics. Nevertheless, in consumer research, most of this subsequent work has focused on other aspects of the experience construct (Klein 1998), and it does not explain the fundamental differences between



experiential and material purchases, nor how these differences influence consumers' evaluations and choices. My framework serves as a first step in this direction. Very much on what I believe was the spirit of Nelson's work, I provide support for the claim that experiences are inherently different from material purchases in important ways, and that these differences influence how consumers think about experiences, evaluate them, and choose them.

The work presented here also adds to the recent interest that experiential purchases has amassed in social psychology (Caprariello and Reis 2013; Carter and Gilovich 2011; Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson 2011; Howell and Hill 2009; Rosenzweig and Gilovich 2012; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). While these research programs are making it increasingly clear that experiences are significantly different from material possessions, they all focus on differences in the *consequences* of consuming one versus the other. More specifically, most of this work is a reaction to the claim that – if disposable income is available – experiential purchases are better than material possessions at advancing happiness (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). My research adds to this growing field by identifying and studying differences between experiences and products *before* consumption.

Next, this research also contributes to a number of areas of consumer research as each of the parts of my framework individually relates to them. The bulk of these contributions have been highlighted in the discussion of the corresponding studies. Therefore, here I only list the research areas to which the individual elements in the framework contribute. The first part of my framework contributes to research on evaluation uncertainty (Urbany, Dickson, and Wilkie 1989) (studies 1 and 4), attribute quantity (Thompson, Hamilton, and Rust 2005; Sela and Berger 2012) (study 1), and analytic versus holistic processing (Monga and John 2008) (studies 2, 3, and 4). The second part contributes to research on self-schemata (Kettle

and Häubl 2011; Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer 2005) (study 5), vividness (Shiv and Huber 2000) (study 6), and narrative processing (Escalas 2004 and 2007) (study 7).

Finally, I believe the last three elements in my framework regarding closeness to self, vividness, and narrative processing relate very naturally to advertising. Also, for all three propositions I have provided tests in which I use an advertising paradigm. This is an important contribution given that most of the previous work on advertising focuses on tangible objects and does not specifically investigate intangibles such as experiences or services (Assmus, Farley, and Lehmann 1984; Mittal 1999; Vakratsas and Ambler 1999). Study 5 shows that because experiences are processed close to the self, the match or mismatch between characteristics of the experience, the medium through which it is promoted, and the consumer sense of self can have a larger impact than in the processing of products. Regarding vividness, study 6 shows that experiences are processed more vividly than products, even if both might be equally easy to imagine and equally hedonic. Consequently, when consumers expand in their information processing to the point of anticipating satisfaction, they feel more attracted to the experience than to the product. Finally, study 7 shows that experiences more than products are processed in the form of narratives. While narrative processing has been increasingly used in advertising models (Escalas 2004 and 2007; Phillips and McQuarrie 2010; Wang and Calder 2006), and the use of stories is prevalent in advertising (Heath and Heath 2007; Nudd 2012), no study yet has analyzed the connections between experiences and advertising. As I have argued, this is a natural interaction since experiences, like stories, are made of a sequence of events and incorporate decisions.

## **Managerial Implications**

In addition to the theoretical contribution, I also believe that this work provides important implications for managers. I think these apply both to managers of experiential goods (such as movies, restaurants, and gyms) as well as to managers of material goods that are either focusing on the experiential aspect of the good or are relying on experiential marketing campaigns. This research should have a broad appeal, given that today there are more products and brands being framed as experiences than in the past (LaSalle and Britton 2003). These managerial implications can be grouped into two big recommendations: (1) consider that consumers perceive the evaluation of experiences to be associated with uncertainty and multidimensionality; and (2) leverage on the three characteristics of the processing of experiences: close to the self, vivid, and narrative form. Although I mainly focus on implications that are related to the advertising and promotion activities, I believe that managers would also benefit from using these two general implications to inform the design of experiences.

*Dealing with uncertainty and multidimensionality.* Managers should be aware that uncertainty is a strong component of the evaluation of experiences. More importantly, this uncertainty is not necessarily something negative. Study 3 shows that – because of uncertainty – consumers evaluate a pricier experience better than a comparable product and choose it more often. Experiences are similar to narratives, and virtually all good narratives incorporate suspense, so it is in the managers’ interest to find the right dosage of uncertainty around the experience. Indeed, study 1 shows that providing more information – an otherwise intuitive mechanism to reduce uncertainty – does not help consumers in the evaluation of an experience. This also suggests that managers of experiences should rely on other mechanisms in order to facilitate the processing and the evaluation of the experience. One such mechanism is holistic processing. Consumers naturally process experiences in a more holistic

fashion, compared to products. Managers may find it beneficial to focus their communications efforts on the whole experience as opposed to on individual attributes. Because experiences are more than simply the sum of their attributes, these strategies should help consumers capture the full value of the experience.

*Leveraging on closeness to self, vividness, and narrative processing.* Most experiences incorporate personal touchpoints, situations or instances in which a brand ambassador (employee) interacts with customers. Because experiences are a more important part of the self, these interactions become more important than comparable interactions in the purchase of a product or a service. Managers of experiences should therefore place special emphasis on these. Regarding communications, if being able to communicate with consumers on a close basis is important for all goods, I believe it is especially so for experiences. Previous research has shown the benefits of self-referencing on advertising material (Escalas 2007). This might be even more beneficial for experiences. This has practical implications down to the design of the advertising materials (for instance, the perspective from which a picture is taken) or the website. Along these lines, perhaps mediums that make it easier to target according to important consumer variables should be especially effective for experiences, rather than other less personal mediums.

The implications regarding vividness follow a parallel reasoning. Being able to transmit vividly will most likely be beneficial for all types of goods, but I would suggest that it should be especially important for experiences. No campaign can be as vivid as the experience itself, but some get closer than others. For instance, giving a foretaste of what the experience is like (movie trailers), hearing about the experience from another customer (WOM), or including elements to trigger the anticipation of the experience (narrative advertising). The recommendation here then is to find mechanisms within the marketing campaign that make it easier to transmit the vividness of the experience.

Finally, when managers design and promote experiences they should leverage on the fact that experiences are processed as narratives. Most experiences are based on a process, with different steps or stages. It is in the managers' benefit to try to leverage on that in order to create a story, and to use elements from good story-telling to better their marketing. Consider again the restaurant experience. The experience can be broken into the classic parts of a story, with a beginning, a development, and a conclusion. The manager can try to ensure that each part has its climax, and again use the notion of uncertainty in his favor. Study 6 shows the importance of consistency. Consistency can be understood as within the communication medium (the print ad, the website), but it can also be understood as consistency across the different communication media.

As a general guideline, communication for experiences should strive to “put consumers in the situation”. This way the communication is able to leverage on all three characteristics: closeness to self, vividness, and narrative processing.

## **Future Research**

I believe my framework and the findings here present interesting research opportunities. I have divided these possible avenues in four different areas: price effects, preference heterogeneity, information search, and consumer satisfaction.

*Price effects.* The results in study 3 – where an experience is chosen more often when its price increases – suggest that the relationship between price and quality for experiences might be different than for products. This is consistent with research in services which claims that price is used as a quality cue when other information is missing (Zeithaml 1981). It is reasonable to think that price sensitivity for experiences might be different than that for

products. Indeed, while some experiences have a set price (e.g. movie tickets), others have an enormous variance (e.g. restaurants, hotels). Previous research on price sensitivity has not considered differences between experiences and products (Bijmolt, van Heerde, and Pieters 2005; but see Rao and Bergen 1992). Perhaps because the processing of experiences is closer to the self, more vivid, and more narrative-like, price sensitivity for experiences is different from that for products.

*Preference heterogeneity.* Next, and in line with the notions of uncertainty and multidimensionality, I believe that preferences for experiences are more heterogeneous – more *individual* – than preferences for material possessions. Preference heterogeneity is the extent to which individual tastes and preferences for a good vary across consumers (Price, Feick, and Higie 1989). Perhaps the attributes and the levels within the attributes that consumers consider important and ideal vary across consumers to a higher degree for experiences than for products. If we consider our examples of experiences and products above (trip, restaurant, movie; laptop, chairs, TV) it does seem likely that there is significantly more variance in what consumers think are the key attributes for experiences than for products, and in what they consider to be the ideal attribute level. This is also consistent with experiences being closer to the self than products (Carter and Gilovich 2012). Because experiences are more self-definitional than products, preferences for experiences are more self-based and heterogeneous than preferences for products.

*Information search.* If preferences for experiences are more personal than those for products, then the information sources on which consumers of experiences rely on might also be more personal. Information search is naturally a key step in consumers' decision making process and a very relevant area of consumer research (Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar 1997). In his seminal work, Nelson suggested that, because experiences are difficult to evaluate prior to consumption, consumers considering experiences lack sufficient knowledge,

and therefore turn to other consumers who have undergone the experience. Accordingly, a sample of Consumer Reports included more reports for experience goods than for search goods (Nelson 1970), presumably because consumers find the former more useful. The proliferation of services and websites offering consumer insights on experiences such as movies (IMDb.com, Rottentomatoes.com), restaurants (Yelp.com, ZAGAT.com) or trips (hotels.com, tripadvisor.com) supports this notion. Indeed, several of the research programs that provide support for the positive impact of WOM use goods that can be considered experiential, such as books (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006) and movies (Liu 2006). My framework provides an explanation for this result. Recommendations from other consumers – especially if they are close to the decision maker – most likely represent the communication medium that best matches the idiosyncrasies of experiences: it can provide a holistic evaluation; it can underline the connections with the self; and it can more easily transmit the vividness and narrative-like components. In sum, it seems very plausible that information search patterns for experiences vary significantly from those for products. Information sources that are more personal and closer to the self should be more relevant for experiences. This is consistent with research finding that similarity between the information source and the decision maker is more important when the decision entails a category with high preference heterogeneity (Feick and Higie 1992).

*Consumer satisfaction.* A final possible avenue for future research is that of consumer satisfaction. As mentioned, most of the recent interest in experiential purchases stems from research on happiness (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). If it is true that experiences are processed holistically and therefore more intuitively, closer to the self, more vividly, and more as a narrative, then it is very possible that the evaluation process itself is more enjoyable for an experience than for a product. This may sound at odds with my claim that the evaluation of experiences is more uncertain than that of products. Uncertainty is normally

associated with negative emotions. Nevertheless, as I have suggested in study 3, uncertainty can also have a positive influence on consumers when it regards an object, such as an experience, that is likely to be processed through imagery elaboration (Arnould and Price 1993; Lee and Qiu 2009). This is consistent with the notion of positive discounting, the delay of positive outcomes (Loewenstein 1987). Perhaps this is another way in which experiences are better than products at advancing happiness: they are not only more enjoyable after purchase, but even before purchase, in the decision making process.



## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX 1

Taxonomy of Goods: Product versus Experience, Utilitarian versus Hedonic

		Utilitarian	Hedonic
Product	Different category	Standard running shoes	Jewels
	Same category	Truck	Sports car
	Same good, different uses	Smartphone (email, calls)	Smartphone (music, games)
	Same good, different users	HQ speakers (expert, musician)	HQ speakers (non-expert)
Experience	Different category	Gym subscription	Three-day trip (anniversary gift)
	Same category	Basic hotel to spend the night	Resort
	Same good, different uses	Dinner (taking the boss out)	Dinner (taking the fiancée out)
	Same good, different users	Concert (critic)	Concert (fan)

## APPENDIX 2

### Study 2 – Description of Stimulus

#### Laptop – Format A

Screen size	Memory	CPU	Weight
Laptop 1 →	Laptop 1 →	Laptop 1 →	Laptop 1 →
Laptop 2 →	Laptop 2 →	Laptop 2 →	Laptop 2 →
Laptop 3 →	Laptop 3 →	Laptop 3 →	Laptop 3 →

#### Laptop – Format B

Laptop 1	Laptop 2	Laptop 3
Screen size →	Screen size →	Screen size →
Memory →	Memory →	Memory →
CPU →	CPU →	CPU →
Weight →	Weight →	Weight →

#### Weekend trip - Format A

Destination	Flight schedule	Hotel description	Activities planned
Package 1 →	Package 1 →	Package 1 →	Package 1 →
Package 2 →	Package 2 →	Package 2 →	Package 2 →
Package 3 →	Package 3 →	Package 3 →	Package 3 →

#### Weekend trip – Format B

Package 1	Package 2	Package 3
Destination →	Destination →	Destination →
Flight schedule →	Flight schedule →	Flight schedule →
Hotel description →	Hotel description →	Hotel description →
Activities planned →	Activities planned →	Activities planned →

## APPENDIX 3

### Studies 4 and 5 – Description of Stimulus

#### *Talk versus Book*

Imagine you consider the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" one of the best books. You have come across the following two alternatives (similar price). Please evaluate them carefully and then make your choice.

- Talk: A ticket to a talk by Mary Badham, the girl who played Scout Finch in the Oscar-winning movie. She has a life-long relation with Harper Lee, the author of the book.
- Book: A new anniversary edition of the book To Kill a Mockingbird, published to celebrate its 50th anniversary (1962). This is a limited edition.

#### *Historic Ticket versus Race*

Imagine the 75th birthday of one of your older relatives is coming up. Further imagine this relative has a passion for horse racing. You have come across the following two alternatives (similar price). Please evaluate them carefully and then make your choice.

- Historic ticket: An original ticket to the 1937 (the year your relative was born) San Juan Capistrano Handicap in Santa Anita, Pasadena, which was won by War Admiral, one of the best horses of the century. The ticket comes elegantly framed.
- Derby: Two tickets to the Oak Tree Derby, which takes around the same time as the birthday, at the Santa Anita race track, Pasadena.

#### *Concert versus CD collection*

Imagine you are thinking about spending some money on yourself. Further imagine you really like classic rock. You have come across the following two alternatives (similar price) regarding the same band. Please evaluate them carefully and then make your choice.

- Concert: The opening band is less well-known but also pretty good. You have to drive around 30 minutes to get to the venue.
- Ultimate CD collection: This ultimate collection came out recently and consists of 3 CDs with their biggest hits across all their albums and active years, and a DVD with one of their most famous concerts. It comes in a very artsy package.

#### *Movie Run versus Poster*

Think about a movie of which you are a big fan. It has to be at least 10 years old. You have come across the following two alternatives (similar price). Please evaluate them carefully and then make your choice.

- Signed original poster: The studio is reprinting one of the two original posters. The poster will come with the signatures of the director and the cast.
- Movie screening plus producer presentation: The studio is re-screening the movie at a theater. After the screening, the producer will make a brief presentation about the movie, the shooting, the cast,... etc., and will answer some questions from the audience (total of 1 hour).

## APPENDIX 4

### Study 6 – Description of Stimulus

#### *Running shoes – Consistent*

Imagine yourself running through this park. Your feet feel remarkably light. You look down and see a pair of Westerley running shoes on your feet. They weigh only 10 oz. You notice a spring in your step. Westerley running shoes provide strong support with their advanced stability system. Westerley's cushioning system spreads shock, reducing injury. Imagine yourself in Westerley's shoes to improve the comfort and quality of your morning run...



*Running shoes – Non-Consistent*

Imagine yourself running through this park. Your feet feel remarkably light. You look down and see a pair of Westerley running shoes on your feet. They weigh only 10 oz. You notice a spring in your step. Westerley running shoes provide strong support with their advanced stability system. Westerley's cushioning system spreads shock, reducing injury. Imagine yourself in Westerley's shoes to improve the comfort and quality of your morning run...



*Restaurant – Consistent*

Augustine is not only a knock-out restaurant-cafe. On top of that, our bar carries a great broad selection of drinks for you to enjoy. Picture yourself at Augustine. Our bar tenders can help you navigate through our drinks selection and prepare any cocktail you wish to experience.



*Restaurant – Non-Consistent*

Augustine is not only a knock-out restaurant-cafe. On top of that, our bar carries a great broad selection of drinks for you to enjoy. Picture yourself at Augustine. Our bar tenders can help you navigate through our drinks selection and prepare any cocktail you wish to experience.





### *Shampoo – Consistent*

Imagine yourself using Laguna shampoo. Laguna feels thick and creamy in your hands.

When you apply it, the foam is copious and dense. You quickly perceive its fresh fragrance.

Unlike most brands, Laguna doesn't use artificial foam boosters,... its abundant foam is the result of a balanced formula rich in cleansing agents and vitamins for your hair.



*Shampoo – Non-Consistent*

Imagine yourself using Laguna shampoo. Laguna feels thick and creamy in your hands. When you apply it, the foam is copious and dense. You quickly perceive its fresh fragrance. Unlike most brands, Laguna doesn't use artificial foam boosters,... its abundant foam is the result of a balanced formula rich in cleansing agents and vitamins for your hair.



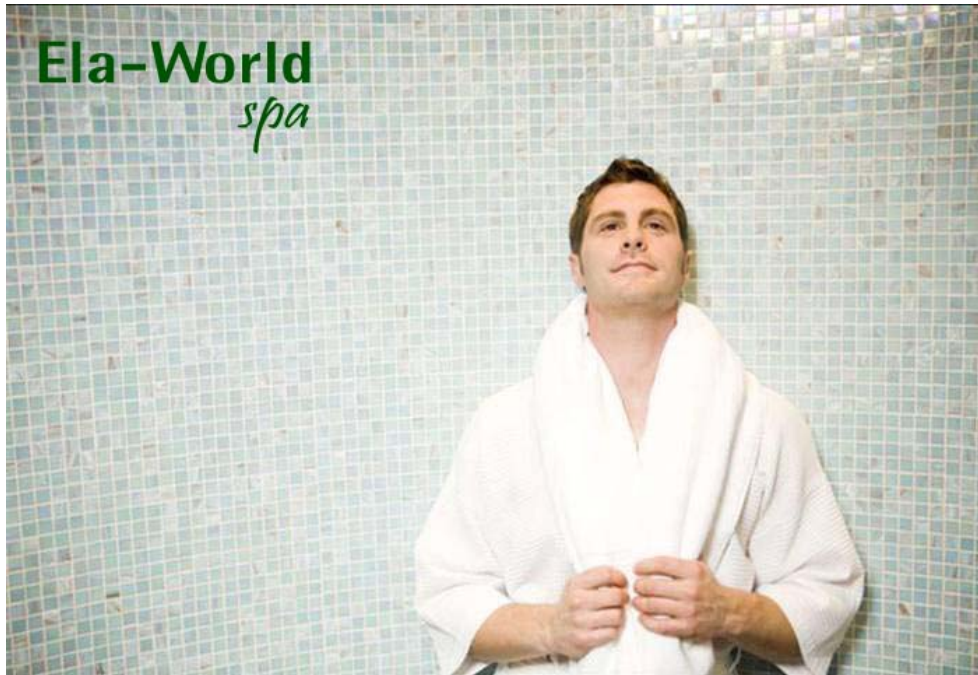
*Spa – Consistent*

Relax, breathe deeply and experience the benefits of a custom back massage at Ela-World Spa under the trained hands of our professional back therapists. Whether you're feeling stressed or you're looking for relief from those nagging aches and pains... We help your back remove excess lymph and inflammation, therefore ensuring a better flow and eliminating the pressure that is irritating the back nerves and causing the pain.



*Spa – Non-Consistent*

Relax, breathe deeply and experience the benefits of a custom back massage at Ela-World Spa under the trained hands of our professional back therapists. Whether you're feeling stressed or you're looking for relief from those nagging aches and pains... We help your back remove excess lymph and inflammation, therefore ensuring a better flow and eliminating the pressure that is irritating the back nerves and causing the pain.



# FIGURES

## FIGURE 1

Framework for the evaluation of experiences

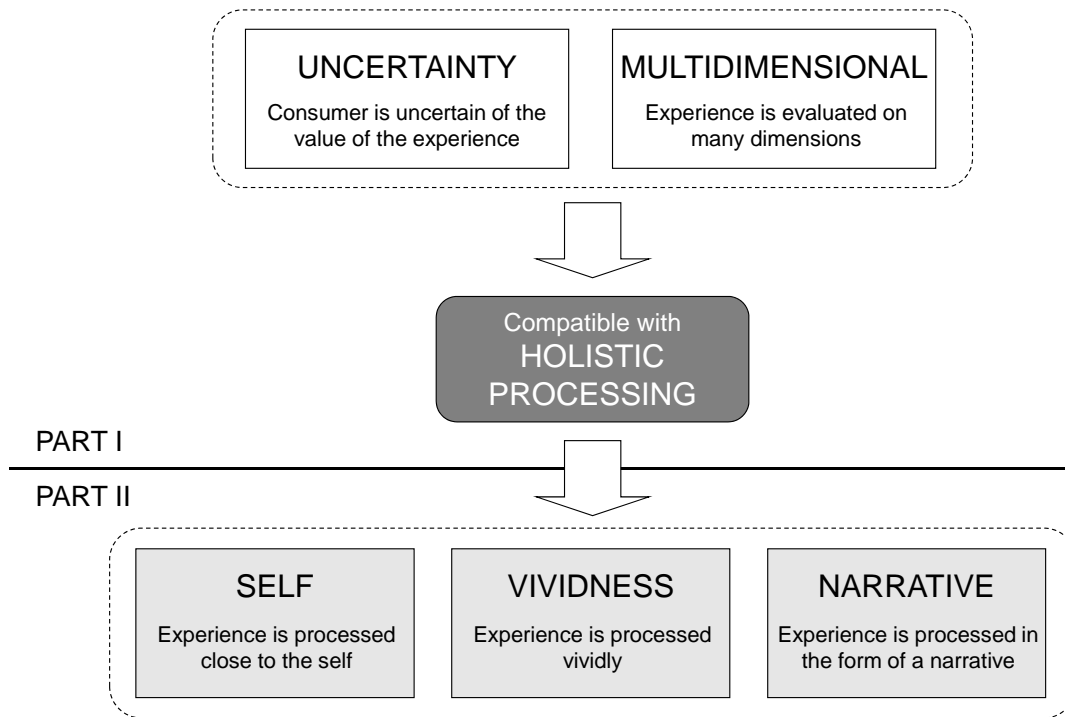


FIGURE 2A

Study 1A – Influence of level of information on an experience or a product on the confidence in making a good decision

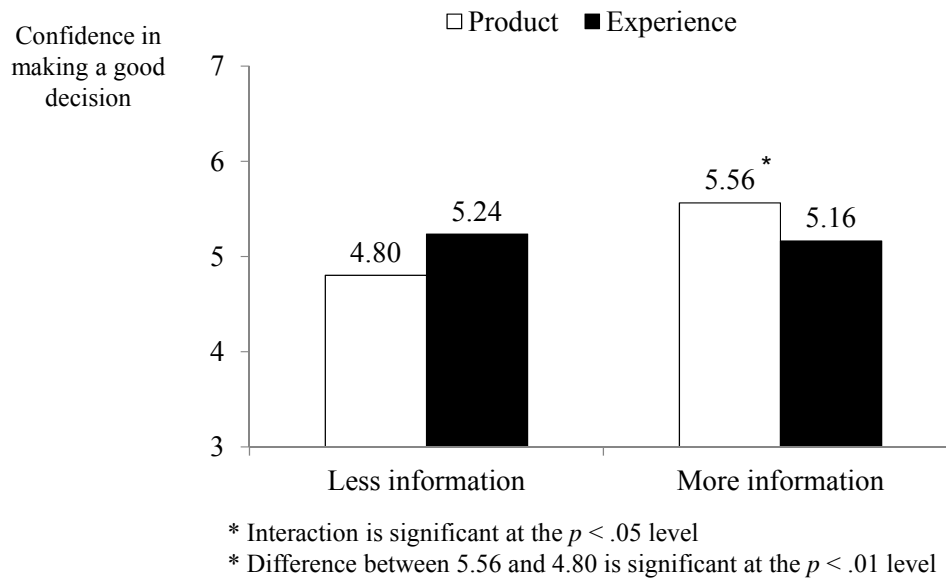


FIGURE 2B

Study 1A – Influence of level of information on an experience or a product on the perceived explanatory power of that information

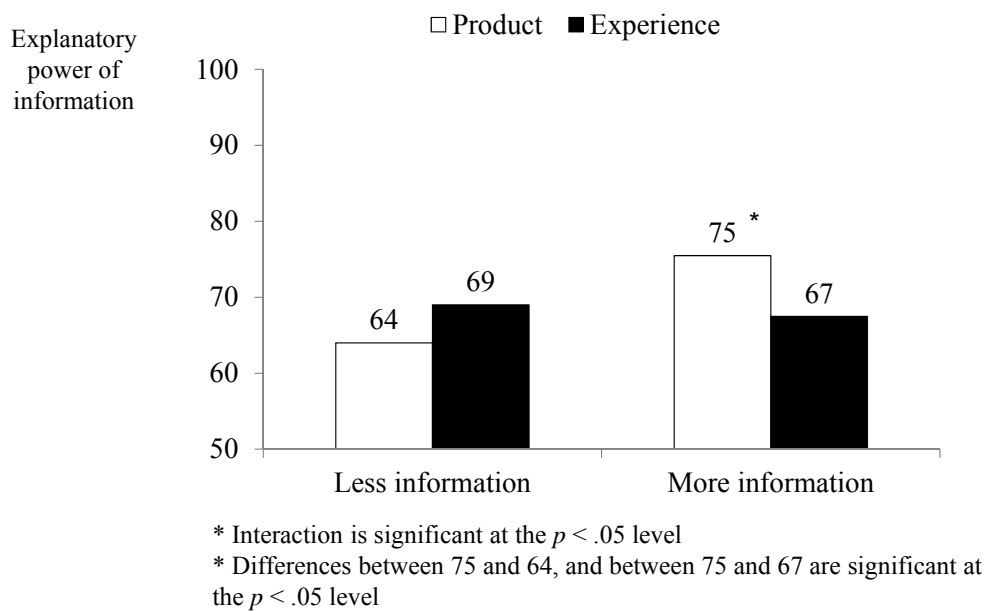
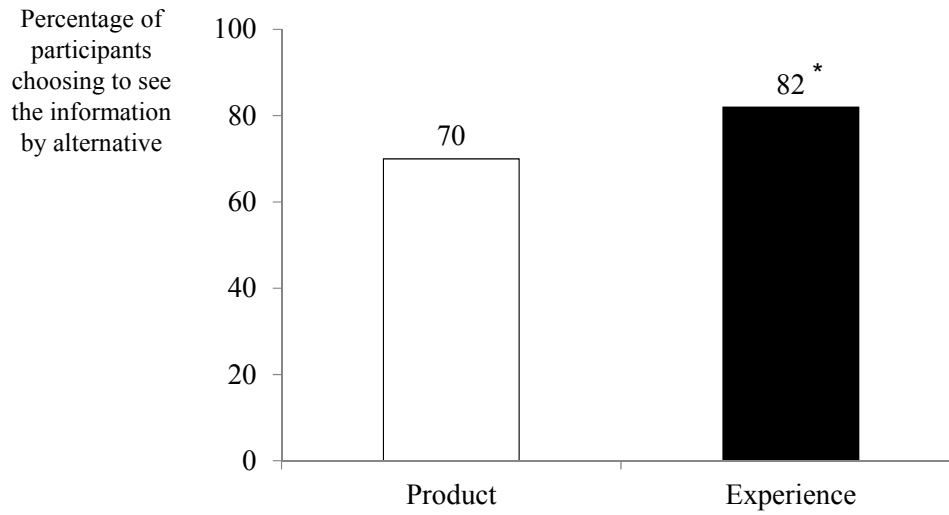


FIGURE 3

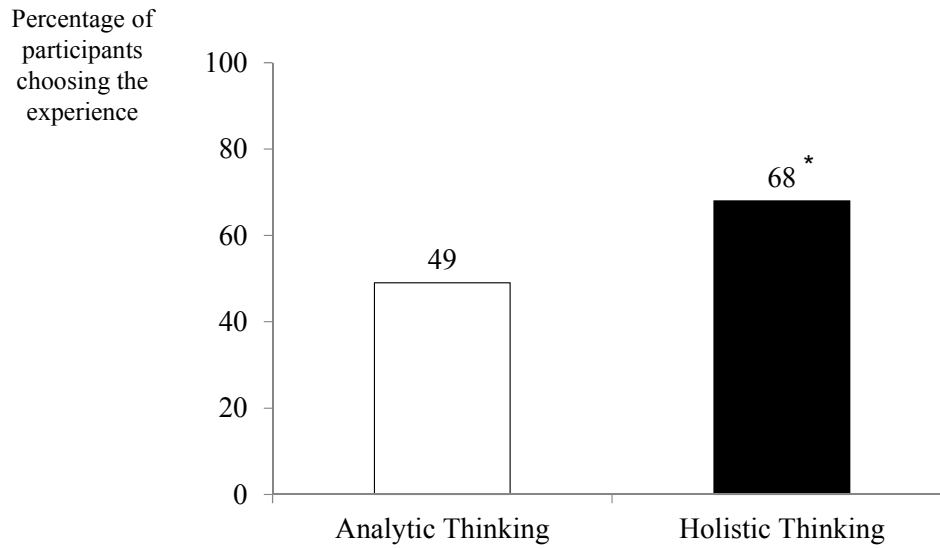
Study 2A – Choice of information format for a decision on a product or an experience



\* Difference between 82 and 70 is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

FIGURE 4

Study 2B – Analytic and holistic processing and choice between an experience and a product

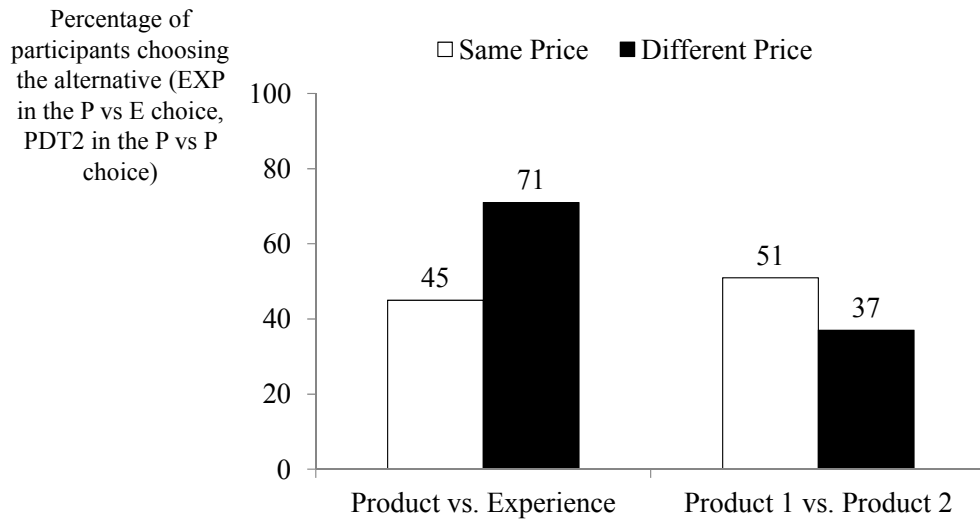


\* Difference between 82 and 70 is significant at the  $p < .05$  level



FIGURE 5

Study 3A – Influence of analytic processing on choices between an experience and a product  
or between two products



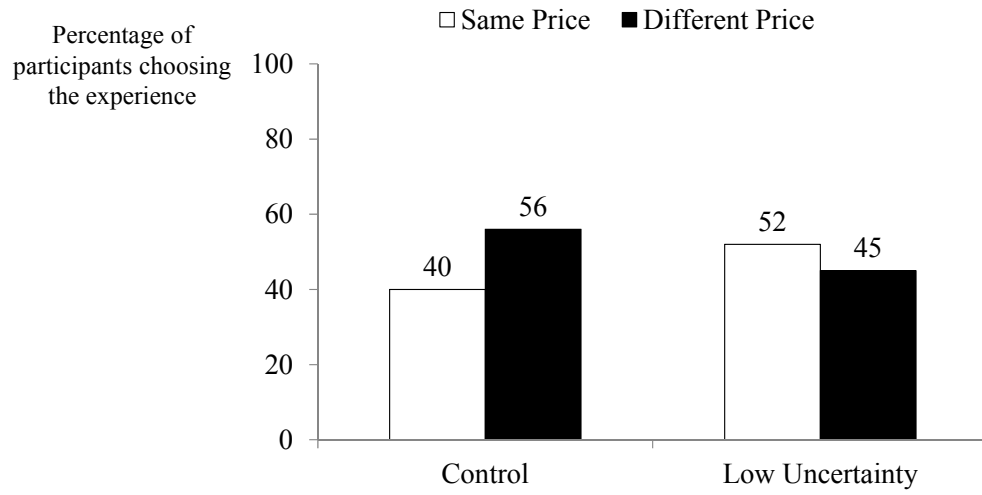
\* Interaction is significant at the  $p < .01$  level

\* Difference between 45 and 71 is significant at the  $p < .01$  level

\* Difference between 51 and 37 is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

FIGURE 6

Study 3B – Analytic processing, uncertainty, and choice between an experience and a product



\* Interaction is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\* Difference between 40 and 56 is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

FIGURE 7

Study 4 – Influence of self-schema congruency on the evaluation of experiences and products

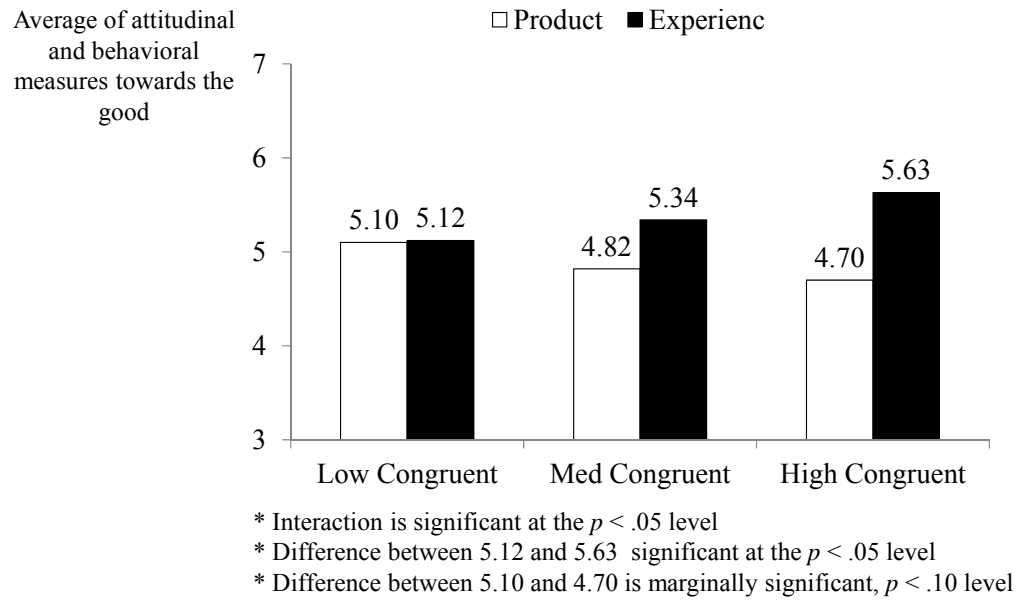
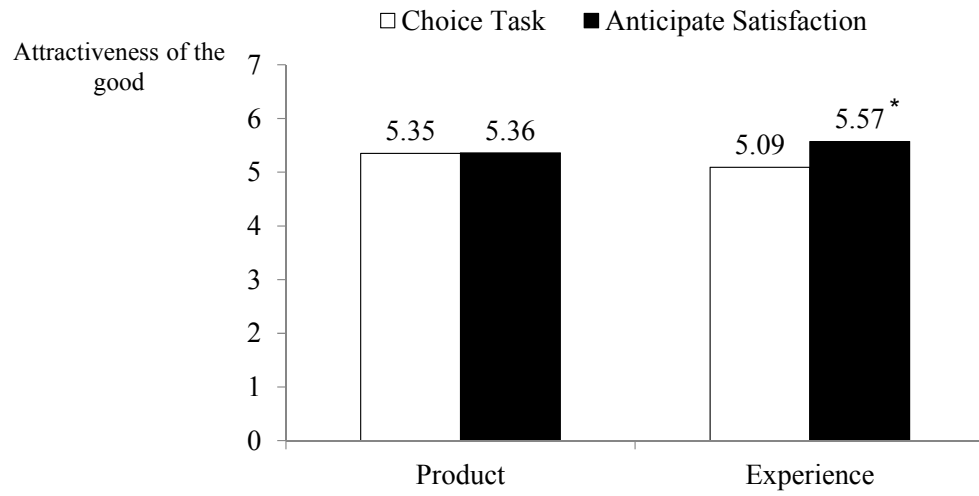


FIGURE 8

Study 5 – Influence of instructions to anticipate satisfaction on attitudes towards an experience or a product

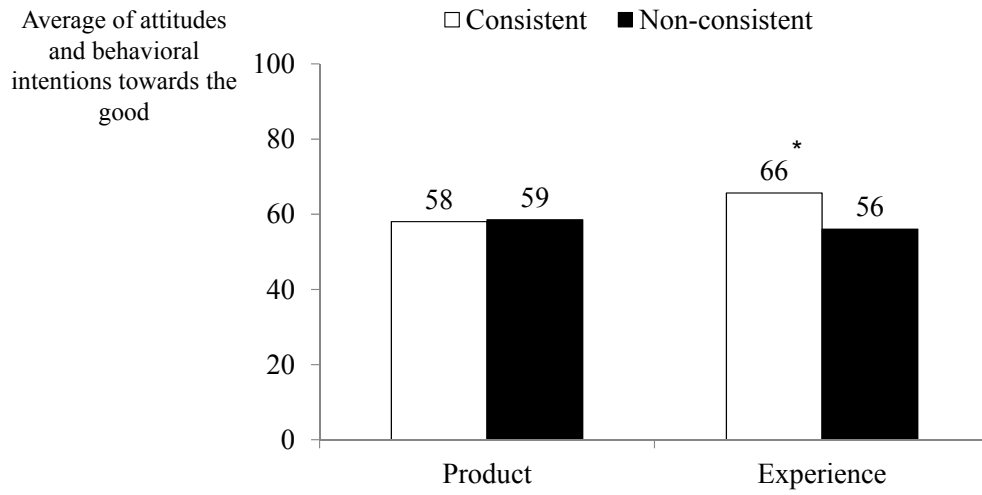


\* Interaction is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\* Difference between 5.09 and 5.57 is significant at the  $p < .01$  level

FIGURE 9

Study 6 – Influence of consistency on the evaluation of ads for products and for experiences



\* Interaction is significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\* Difference between 66 and 56 is significant at the  $p < .01$  level

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