



Effect of Time Horizon Perspective on Apparel Liking

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Introduction Recent studies revealed the importance of time horizon perspectives in understanding happiness derived from consumption (i.e., post-purchase consumption evaluation) (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Most studies advocate the increased importance of experience consumption (e.g., travel) over material consumption (e.g., apparel) to consumers with limited time horizon. Although these studies have deepened our understanding of consumers' motivation, prior research does not provide informative implication to apparel retailers. The current study aims to fill this gap and investigate the role of time horizon in consumers' apparel pre-purchase evaluation.

Literature Review Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen, 1992) explains how people become increasingly invest selectively in emotionally meaningful activities as people see time as limited. Both chronic factors (e.g., age) and temporary factors (e.g., moving away from a town) can influence time horizon perception and the motivational shift resulted from time horizon affects people's behaviors including consumption patterns. When people have a limited time horizon perspective, they prefer relatively mundane (vs. extraordinary) experiences (vs. materials). Prior studies demonstrated that consumers feel more satisfied and happier with experience than material consumption because experiences are more self-defining than materials (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). However, it is unclear to what degree time horizon will affect material (i.e., apparel) purchase decisions. It is assumed that shorter time horizon will positively affect experience but not material consumption because experiences are more emotionally meaningful than materials. Thus, experience purchases, but not materials (including apparel products), will be favored by consumers with short time horizon (H1). This effect of time horizon will be exaggerated particularly when the item is inexpensive as the high price of an item makes the nature of material consumption salient (H2). However, materials can have an experiential aspect. Although apparel items are typically considered as material goods, sensory experiences and social experiences related to apparel items can increase the emotional meaningfulness of the consumption. For example, when consumers enjoy how the materials touch the skin, and how they can enjoy the item together with their friends, apparel items can be perceived as closer to experience consumption than pure material consumption. Thus, it is likely that perceived consumption type attenuates the negative effect of time horizon on apparel consumption (H3).

Methods Two studies were conducted to test the hypotheses. Study 1 tested if materials were viewed as less meaningful than experiences by people with short time horizon at different price points. Study 2 tested whether highlighting the experiential side of apparel items reduced the negative effect of short time horizon. For both studies, students at a large Midwestern university were recruited through emails. Online experiments were conducted to test the hypotheses. Following the procedure used in previous studies, time horizon was manipulated by framing the remaining of their lifespan (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014). For study 1 (n=117), participants were randomly assigned to either the short or expansive time horizon condition and evaluated 6 different products (3 prices: \$30/\$2000/\$25000 x 2 types: experience/material) for meaningfulness. For study 2 (n=66), a 2(time horizon) x 2(consumption type) x 2(price: \$20/\$1000) mixed-design experiment was conducted. Time horizon and consumption type were between-subject factors, and the price was the within-subject factor. The experience consumption condition read two apparel product descriptions highlighting the experience of wearing the items while the material condition read descriptions focusing on material possession.

Results Manipulation of time horizon was successful ($F(1,114)=7.54, p<.01$). Results of study 1 revealed that the participants in the short time horizon condition perceived experience purchases as more meaningful ($F(1, 115)=4.17, p<.05$; $M_{Long}=2.78$ vs. $M_{Short}=3.05$). However, there was no difference in meaningfulness perception for material purchases. Thus, H1 was supported. Study 2 results were analyzed to test H2 and H3. The results supported H2. The interaction between time horizon and price was marginally significant ($F(1,112)=3.260, p=.07$). As expected, the participants with short time horizon perceived the inexpensive apparel item to be as meaningful as the expensive item. However, participants with long time horizon viewed the expensive apparel item as more meaningful than inexpensive item. Lastly, the three-way interaction (consumption type x time horizon x price) was not significant ($F(1,112)=2.550, p=.113$), rejecting H3.

Discussion and Implications The results of the study provide additional evidence for the time horizon perspective effect on consumers' perception of different types of products. Moreover, by studying the effects within the apparel products, the results provide important insights for apparel retailers. Apparel retailers targeting older consumers who have short time horizon are encouraged to highlight the meaningfulness of the consumption experience particularly for less expensive items. Future research with a different manipulation method for consumption type can be beneficial to confirm the results of the study.

*References available upon request