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The Effect of a Delay between Choice and Consumption on Consumption Enjoyment

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A consumer choosing a product must often wait before consuming it. In this article, we consider the consequences of waiting on consumption enjoyment. We propose that the effect of a delay on consumption enjoyment depends on both the negative utility of the wait itself and on the positive utility of anticipating a pleasant consumption experience. These factors exert different degrees of influence, depending on characteristics of the decision task. The results of three studies suggest that a delay increases consumption enjoyment for pleasurable products when actual consumption occurs, but decreases enjoyment for imagined consumption. Furthermore, the vividness of the awaited product moderates these effects.

In many situations, consumers experience a delay between choosing a product and consuming that product. For example, after choosing a product in a mail-order catalog, the consumer must wait a number of days until the product is delivered. In other situations, a consumer may purchase an item at a store but must wait until getting home to use the product. In this research, we examine how this delay may affect the enjoyment of a chosen item once it is consumed. Prior research suggests that such a delay might cause either an increase or a decrease in enjoyment. In this article, we attempt to synthesize these different approaches in order to predict the effect of a delay under different circumstances.

One stream of research suggests that a delay might reduce the enjoyment of the product once it is consumed. This research focuses on the increased anxiety and stress that can result from a wait (e.g., Osuna 1985) and how this stress can lower a consumer's evaluation of a consumption experience (e.g., Houston, Bettencourt, and Wenger 1998). However, another stream of research suggests that a delay might increase consumption enjoyment. This research focuses on the positive effects of anticipating a pleasant experience (e.g., Caplin and Leahy 2001; Loewenstein 1987).

Although prior research has addressed the circumstances under which people choose to wait and the effects of a delay on such variables as moods or evaluations of service received, little research has been done on the effects of an imposed delay on actual consumption enjoyment (as Frederick, Loewenstein, and O'Donoghue [2002] recommend). We propose that the consequences of a delay on consumption enjoyment depend on two competing factors. First, consumers may anticipate the future consumption of a product and may find this to be pleasant if the outcome is positive. Second, consumers may find waiting to be frustrating and uncomfortable. These factors are expected to interact, and the degree to which one of these factors exerts a stronger influence than the other may depend on characteristics of the decision task. We propose that pleasurable anticipation will be more likely to occur when the product is actually consumed, as compared to when it is evaluated in a hypothetical decision task. Consistent with this idea, our results indicate that when a pleasurable product is actually consumed, a delay has a positive effect on enjoyment. However, when consumption is only imagined, the frustrating effects of the imposed wait loom larger than the anticipated pleasure, resulting in a decrease in consumption enjoyment. Furthermore, we find that placing the product in front of the consumer during the wait increases the vividness of the imagined consumption, thereby increasing anticipation and, ultimately, consumption enjoyment. Finally, consistent with our framework, we find that consumers are not aware of the increase in consumption enjoyment that occurs after a wait, nor do they account for it when making future decisions.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE REACTION TO DELAYED CONSUMPTION

Several lines of prior work suggest that a delay will have negative consequences on consumption enjoyment. First, discounted utility theory assumes a positive discount rate; that is, people prefer things sooner rather than later (e.g., Loewenstein and Prelec 1992). As a result, it could be argued that consumers will not enjoy a product as much if they must wait for it. In support of this idea, prior research has found that anticipated delay decreases the value of rewards (Mischel, Grusec, and Masters 1969). Furthermore, a delay can result in anxiety and stress, and this can result in negative effects of delay on evaluations of service providers (e.g., Dellaert and Kahn 1999). However, the rewards for the delays studied in the services literature cited above tended to be relatively mundane, utilitarian activities (such as depositing a check), which would be unlikely to produce any hedonic or visceral effects (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Such neutral consumption experiences are usually viewed as an inconvenience or a waste of time. Finally, prior research has found that the valence of the expected consumption experience matters. In particular, waiting for a negative experience, such as an electric shock, results in fear or dread and thus can also lower the overall utility of the experience (Loewenstein 1987).

Other research has found positive effects of waiting in the case of pleasurable experiences. For example, people have learned through socialization that valuable rewards, such as birthday gifts, are worth waiting for (Nisan 1973). In addition, research has found that people can derive utility from anticipating the experience of a pleasurable activity (Caplin and Leahy 2001). Thus, people may prefer to impose a wait on themselves for certain positive outcomes, such as a kiss from one's favorite movie star (Loewenstein 1987). Additional research (e.g., Loewenstein and Prelec 1993) supports the notion that sometimes people prefer to anticipate and savor enjoyable outcomes and prefer improving sequences where they can wait for the best outcome. Thus, a delay between choice and consumption might increase consumption enjoyment for pleasurable experiences. The research on which these ideas are built, although interesting, has often focused on self-imposed delays rather than externally imposed delays. In contrast, the current research explores how the enjoyment of the actual consumption experience itself is affected by externally imposed delays and explicitly tests the process underlying the effects of such a delay.

A synthesis of the prior research suggests that two major factors may be at play: the pleasurable anticipation of something to come and the aversive experience of the wait. In this article, we examine the conditions under which one of these factors might exert a stronger influence than the other. Specifically, if the pleasure of anticipation exerts a greater weight, then consumption enjoyment should increase after a delay. Conversely, if the aversiveness of the wait itself exerts a greater influence, then consumption enjoyment should be diminished due to the delay. We next consider influences on the degree to which either of these two factors exerts a greater weight on consumption enjoyment.

Consumer emotions known as visceral factors might explain the circumstances under which consumers place greater weight on either the positive or negative effects of the delay. Visceral factors have been defined as drive states, such as craving or sexual desire (Loewenstein 1996), that result from biological feedback from the body. Such factors are fleeting, producing an immediate urge to consume that subsides over time. They affect individuals negatively, through the uncomfortable experience of desire, and positively, through the pleasure of satisfying that desire.

We propose that anticipation is more likely to be activated when consumers are more directly affected by these visceral factors, specifically in situations where either actual consumption occurs or where products are presented in a vivid manner. Without these influences, consumption enjoyment should be influenced more by the negative aspects of the wait itself. When waiting for a positive, enjoyable product, such as chocolate, the wait might be painful, but we also expect that anticipation of the outcome will occur. Eating a food such as chocolate can be considered hedonic consumption because it is multisensory and arouses visceral desires in many consumers (Gibson and Desmond 1999; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). For such products, we expect the pleasure of anticipation to weigh more heavily than the pain of waiting in determining the enjoyment of the product when it is actually consumed. Furthermore, although we limit our focus to externally imposed delays, such delays might be viewed by participants as requiring self-control. They face an obstacle between themselves and the reward and are thus likely to experience elation at the point of goal attainment (Carver and Scheier 2000). Thus, we expect that for products producing pleasurable consequences, a delay between choice and consumption will have a positive effect on consumption enjoyment.

However, when a consumer is anticipating a negative experience, both the anticipated displeasure of consumption and the disutility of waiting should induce an overall negative effect of a delay. For example, Loewenstein (1987) found that people preferred to get an electric shock over with immediately so that they would not have to experience an extended period of dread and fear leading up to that experience. Therefore, we expect that for products with unpleasant properties, a delay should decrease consumption enjoyment. This leads to the first hypothesis, which focuses on how the valence of the consumption experience can moderate the effect of a delay on consumption enjoyment.

H1: The pleasantness of the consumed product will moderate the effect of an imposed delay on consumption enjoyment. Consumption enjoyment will increase when there is a delay between choice and consumption for products with pleasant properties, but will decrease for products with unpleasant properties.

Real versus Hypothetical Consumption

In addition to the pleasantness of the product, another potential moderator of the effects of a delay on consumption enjoyment is whether consumption is real or hypothetical. Consumers frequently imagine how they might feel about a future consumption experience while deciding whether to purchase a product (e.g., Mellers 2000). We propose that when a delay does not result in pleasurable feelings of anticipation, the delay will have a negative influence on enjoyment. For instance, consider a consumer who is deciding where to go for dinner. While imagining dining at a restaurant might induce a modicum of anticipation, the consumer who has never actually visited the restaurant will experience less anticipation than one who actually sits in the restaurant, waits for dinner to be served, and consumes the meal. Without the anticipated pleasure of an actual visceral experience, the pain of waiting should receive greater weight. Therefore, when consumers imagine delayed consumption, their consumption enjoyment might not increase due to a lack of anticipation and might instead decrease due to the pain of the wait itself.

This proposition is supported by research that shows that consumers prefer actual sensory experiences to descriptions of those experiences (Shapiro and Spence 2002). In addition, research shows that imagining a sour taste does not produce nearly the same amount of salivation as does consuming an actual sour lemon candy (Drummond 1995). When consumers are unable to construct elaborate mental imagery about a product, their desires are not enhanced (MacInnis and Price 1987). Therefore, without this pleasant or unpleasant visceral response, the pain of waiting should exert the main influence.

H2: The effect of a delay on consumption enjoyment will depend on whether consumption is hypothetical or real. Participants who imagine consuming pleasant products will enjoy them less after a wait than those who imagine consuming them immediately, while participants who actually consume those products will enjoy them more after a wait than those who consume them immediately.

Vividness of the Consumption Experience

As mentioned above, one variable that arouses visceral factors is the vividness of a stimulus. A vivid stimulus is one that is physically or temporally proximate or one that is emotionally appealing (Nisbett and Ross 1980). For example, a consumer might be reminded of the product during the wait by seeing someone else using it, seeing a picture of it, or seeing the actual product in a store. Vividness enhances an individual's ability to visualize a future outcome (e.g., Shiv and Huber 2000). As a consequence, the physical proximity of a stimulus, such as food, increases an individual's visceral response, which can have a profound effect on preferences.

Consumers sometimes experience sudden, powerful urges to buy something immediately. These urges are caused by factors such as physical or sensory proximity that shift consumers' reference points and cause them to mentally take possession of the product (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). Waiting is more aversive, and even frustrating, when the actual reward, rather than a representation of the reward, is physically close, visible, and can be examined. For example, Mischel (1974) found that participants' cognitive representations of their potential rewards played an important role in how long they chose to wait. When they focused on the "hot" properties of the reward (such as taste or smell), delay was more difficult than when they focused on "cold" properties (such as the look or form of the reward). When the stimulus causes mental elaboration and imagery, it intensifies consumers' awareness of the product's benefits, thereby increasing desire for the product (MacInnis and Price 1987). In such situations, the frustration at facing an obstacle to one's goals may lead to continuous rumination about reaching that goal (Martin and Tesser 1989).

Prior research suggests that an individual is more likely to delay consumption when the reward is more vivid or imaginable because the amount of preconsumption anticipation is increased (Loewenstein 1987). Consistent with this notion, Mischel and Ebbesen (1970) demonstrated that making hedonic aspects of the reward salient enhances participants' subjective value for the delayed reward. On the other hand, research also points out that physical proximity of the desired object produces impulsivity (and therefore decreases delay) under conditions where an appetitive response is elicited (Loewenstein 1996). In other words, it is much more difficult to delay eating chocolate when exposed to the sight and smell of that chocolate. Therefore, we might expect that a vivid stimulus would intensify both the pleasure of anticipating that object and the pain of waiting for it.

As suggested in hypothesis 2, when consumers imagine a delay, the pain of waiting looms larger than the pleasure of consumption because consumers are unable to mentally elaborate on the product's desirability and focus instead on the pain of waiting. However, making the stimulus more vivid for consumers might enhance anticipation, even in the case of imagined consumption. This is consistent with research finding that consumers are better able to anticipate their future satisfaction for products that can be vividly imagined (Shiv and Huber 2000). On the other hand, in the case where there is real consumption, consumption enjoyment should increase regardless of the vividness of the stimulus. This line of reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: For imagined consumption of a pleasant product, the vividness of that product will moderate the degree to which delay affects enjoyment. Specifically, vividness will increase imagined consumption enjoyment after a wait.

Memory for Consumption Enjoyment

Visceral factors, as mentioned earlier, may be the driving force behind whether the pleasure of anticipation or the aversiveness of the wait exerts a stronger influence on consumption enjoyment. Although visceral factors can have a profound influence on immediate behavior, individuals tend to forget the influence of such factors on past behavior and therefore underestimate these factors' impact on future decisions (Loewenstein 1996). We predicted in hypothesis 2 that consumers would have difficulty in accurately predicting how a delay would affect their consumption enjoyment, given that imagined, nonvivid consumption would not evoke a visceral response. We next propose that consumers will not accurately account for the hedonic effects of the delay when making future decisions. Once the urge to consume has been satisfied, the "cold," cognitive effects of the wait itself will take precedence over the "hot," visceral effects of anticipating the reward (Mischel 1974). As a result, we predict that consumers will not even realize after the fact that their consumption enjoyment actually increased due to a delay, thereby reducing their global evaluations of the experience.

According to Kahneman et al.'s (1993) rule of temporal monotonicity, utility is additive over time, and adding moments of pain to an experience can only make the global evaluation of that experience worse. Therefore, the global, retrospective account of the wait plus the consumption should receive a lower rating than the consumption experience alone. Although the positive consequences of anticipation are expected to exert a greater influence at the time of consumption, the negative consequences of the imposed wait are expected to exert a greater influence on a consumer's retrospective evaluation of both waiting to consume and then consuming. Consumers' lack of memory of their experienced hedonic boost suggests that they would not choose to experience such a delay in the future, as the remembered pain from the wait should outweigh any fleeting gains in consumption enjoyment.

H4a: Global evaluations (of both waiting and consuming) will be lower for consumers who must delay consumption than for those who do not need to wait.

H4b: Consumers who must delay consumption are more likely to wish to consume immediately next time than are those who do not need to wait.

In the following studies, we explore the effects of an imposed delay on consumption enjoyment; the moderating roles of product pleasantness, vividness, and real/imagined consumption; and the ability of a consumer to account for these effects in future decisions. In study 1, we test hypothesis 1 to determine whether an imposed delay influences consumption enjoyment differently for pleasant and unpleasant products. In study 2, we consider the role of imaginary consumption and vividness as moderating variables in order to test hypotheses 2 and 3. Study 3 tests hypotheses 4a and 4b by exploring whether consumers will be able to accurately recognize the effect of a delay on their consumption enjoyment.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants were 201 undergraduate marketing students who completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire for extra credit in an introductory marketing course. We conducted a 2 (delay or not) × 2 (pleasant vs. unpleasant product) between-subjects design. In the no-delay condition, participants first chose between two product options and then immediately consumed their choice. In the delay condition, participants first made a choice, filled out unrelated surveys, and then approximately 30 min. later received their choice and then consumed it. Participants were not informed about the length of the wait, as prior research shows that this is more likely to induce negative feelings of anxiety about the wait (Dellaert and Kahn 1999). Participants began the experiment by choosing between two types of chocolate, Hershey's Kiss or Hershey's Hug (pleasant), or between two brands of prune juice, Langers or Sunsweet (unpleasant).[1] After consuming their choice, participants were asked, "How much did you like or dislike eating/drinking this [product]?" Participants responded on a 15-point scale, with endpoints of "dislike very much" (−7) and "like very much" (+7), and with a midpoint of zero. This paralleled the measure of food liking used by Kahneman and Snell (1992). In addition, participants were asked how frequently they ate/drank the product category and responded on a seven-point scale anchored with "never" (1) and "very often" (7).

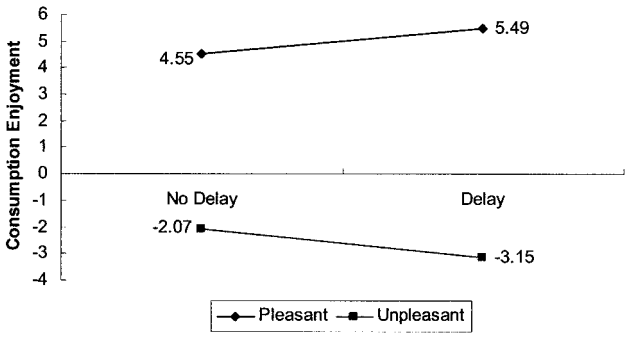
Results

Figure 1 illustrates the results of study 1. An ANOVA model demonstrated that the main effect of delay was insignificant ($F < 1$), while the main effect of product type was significant ($F(1, 200) = 10.61$, $p < .01$), indicating greater preference for the chocolate than the prune juice. As predicted by hypothesis 1, the delay × product interaction was significant ($F(1, 200) = 6.33$, $p < .05$). In particular, we found that participants who had to wait for the chocolate enjoyed it more than those who did not have to wait ($M = 5.49$ vs. 4.55; $F(1, 200) = 4.28$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, we found that participants who had to wait to drink

[1] In this article, we use the terms "pleasant" and "unpleasant" based on research showing the importance of pleasure in affecting consumption enjoyment (e.g., Shiv and Nowlis 2004, in this issue). Another common way to classify products is to label them as either hedonic or utilitarian (e.g., Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). However, we found that our participants did not consider drinking prune juice a utilitarian activity. Instead, the participants considered drinking prune juice to be an unpleasant experience, as demonstrated by their enjoyment ratings. However, it would be interesting in future research to examine how a delay might affect consumption enjoyment of a utilitarian product.

FIGURE 1

STUDY 1 RESULTS: CONSUMPTION ENJOYMENT



the prune juice liked it less than those who did not have to wait ($M = -3.15$ vs. -2.07; $F(1, 200) = 4.84$, $p < .05$).

One possible concern with this study is that the results might be stronger for more avid consumers of the product category because they might experience more anticipation during the delay. However, there were no significant differences in our effects based on the frequency with which participants consumed either chocolate or prune juice ($F < 1$ for each test). It is also possible that participants who knew they would have to wait would be more likely to choose a product they knew they would enjoy, due to risk aversion. However, we found no significant differences in the particular product that was chosen as a function of experimental condition. Thus, the results cannot be explained by a difference in the product that is initially chosen.

Another possible alternative explanation for our results is that participants experienced cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) as a result of their choices. Perhaps participants in the delay conditions had more time to bolster their choices, resulting in higher ratings. While this might provide an alternative explanation for our findings for pleasant products (chocolate), it would not explain our findings for unpleasant products (prune juice), where ratings decreased after a delay.

The results from study 1 lend support to the idea that the anticipation of the taste experience can affect consumption enjoyment once the product is consumed. In the next study, we explore what happens when participants do not have access to visceral factors but instead simply imagine consumption. For example, a consumer might wait for a while in a line and then abandon the queue before consumption occurs, or a consumer might participate in an online auction, wait several days for the auction to end, and then lose the auction, thus having imagined but never experienced consumption. When individuals imagine the consumption of a product without ever consuming it, we expect them to give less weight to the pleasure of anticipation and more weight to the discomfort of waiting, thereby decreasing their predicted consumption enjoyment after a delay. We also explore whether vividness may be an important factor in explaining our results. For consumers who already experience a visceral reaction due to actual consumption, making the product more vivid may not further increase consumption enjoyment due to a delay. However, if consumers who imagine consumption are unable to anticipate future consumption because that consumption is not vivid, adding vividness via physical proximity should encourage such anticipation, thereby increasing consumption enjoyment, even when consumption is imaginary.

STUDY 2

Method

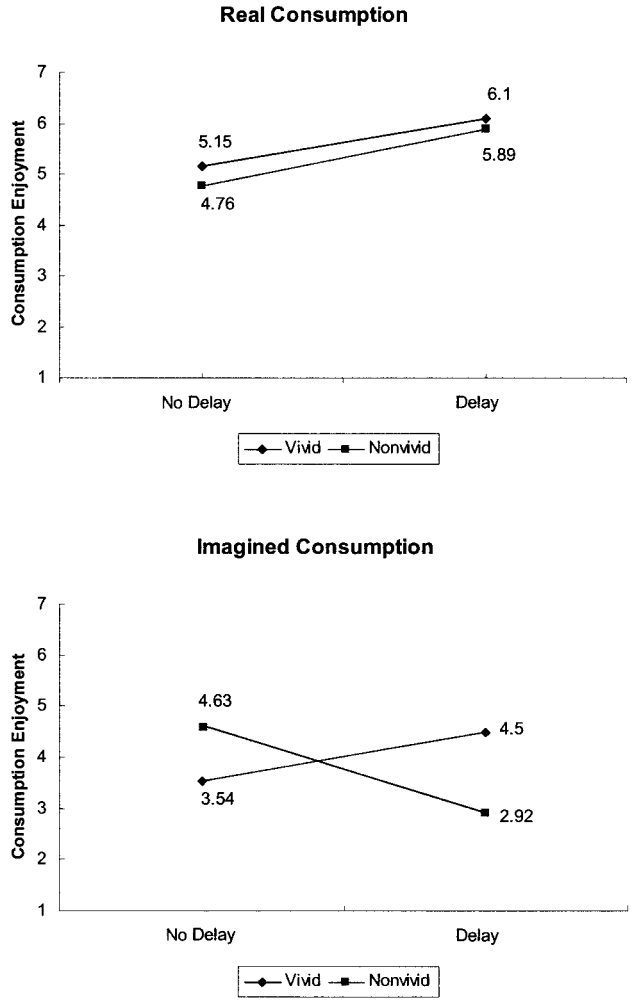
Participants were 371 undergraduate marketing students who completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire for extra credit in an introductory marketing course. We conducted a 2 (delay or not) × 2 (real or imagined consumption) × 2 (vivid or nonvivid) between-subjects design. In addition, this study was limited to consumption of pleasant products. As in study 1, participants consumed a Hershey's Kiss or a Hershey's Hug, either immediately or after a 30 min. delay during which they completed unrelated questionnaires. The second factor determined whether participants actually ate the chocolate or imagined eating it. Specifically, those who actually ate the chocolate after the wait answered the same question we asked in study 1: "How much did you like or dislike eating this chocolate?" Participants in the imagined condition were informed at the beginning of the study that they would not actually get to eat their hypothetical choices and instead were asked (either immediately or after a delay), "If you were to eat your choice of chocolate right now, how much would you like or dislike eating this chocolate?" All participants responded on the 15-point scale used in study 1. We manipulated the final factor, vividness, by either placing the two chocolate candies on the participant's desk during the choice and delay periods (vivid) or keeping the candies hidden until consumption time (nonvivid). After eating (or imagining eating) the chocolate, participants rated their enjoyment of the chocolate on the same scale used in the first experiment. Next, they rated their willingness to buy more of this chocolate, using a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 20 (very likely). In particular, they were asked, "How likely would you be to buy more of this chocolate right now?" We included this measure to see if our results would generalize from consumption enjoyment to willingness to buy.

Results

Figure 2 illustrates the results of study 2. In the real consumption conditions, where participants actually consumed their chocolate choices, consumption enjoyment increased after an imposed delay, regardless of whether the stimulus was vivid or not. However, when participants imagined consuming the chocolate, consumption enjoyment increased after an imposed delay only when the stimulus was vivid. When they did not have access to the sight of the

FIGURE 2

STUDY 2 RESULTS: CONSUMPTION ENJOYMENT AS A FUNCTION OF DELAY



actual chocolate, participants' imagined consumption decreased after a delay.

An ANOVA model demonstrated a significant three-way interaction between delay, real/imagined consumption, and vividness ($F(1, 370) = 6.14$, $p < .05$). For actual consumption, consumption enjoyment increased after a delay for both vividly (5.15 to 6.1) and nonvividly presented products (4.76 to 5.89) ($F(1, 370) = 5.46$, $p < .05$), with no significant moderation due to vividness ($F < 1$). These results are consistent with hypothesis 1 (for pleasant products) and our first experiment.

For imagined consumption, in contrast, the two-way interaction between delay and vividness was significant ($F(1, 370) = 5.02$, $p < .05$), supporting hypothesis 3. Furthermore, consumption enjoyment decreased from 4.63 to 2.92 after a delay when the stimulus was nonvivid ($F(1, 370) = 8.11$, $p < .01$), providing support for hypothesis 2. However, when the stimulus was made vivid in this imagined condition, consumption enjoyment increased from 3.54 to 4.5 as a result of the delay. It is unlikely that social norms or demand played a role in these results because participants responded differently in the imagined condition than in the real condition, imagining that their preference for chocolate would decrease rather than increase after an imposed wait. If they were trying to guess the "correct" answer, we would expect participants in both conditions to respond similarly.

We next examined the effects of delay, vividness, and real/imagined consumption on willingness to buy more chocolate and again found a significant three-way interaction ($F(1, 370) = 4.99$, $p < .05$). The results for willingness to buy followed the same pattern as those for consumption enjoyment. In the nonvivid, real condition, willingness to buy increased from 13.0 to 15.73 when there was a delay ($F(1, 370) = 7.84$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, willingness to buy decreased from 12.76 to 9.89 after a delay in the imagined condition ($F(1, 370) = 8.15$, $p < .01$). However, when the chocolate was vividly presented, delay had a positive effect on willingness to buy more chocolate, whether consumption was real ($M = 12.90$ vs. 14.97) or imagined ($M = 11.41$ vs. 13.85).

Throughout the article, we have suggested that our results are driven by anticipation. However, one limitation so far is that we have not tested any underlying decision mechanisms. Thus, one of the goals of the next study is to test whether our framework indeed can be supported with an analysis of process measures. Furthermore, the next study examines another factor that can help to shed light on our proposed framework, that is, are consumers aware of and can they accurately recall increased enjoyment of consumption after an imposed delay? Our framework suggests that, since actual consumption evokes visceral reactions, consumers will not recognize that a delay increased their enjoyment of the product.

STUDY 3

Method

Participants were 228 undergraduate marketing students who completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire for extra credit in an introductory marketing course. There were two between-subjects conditions. In one condition, there was no delay; in the other condition, an imposed delay was manipulated as in prior experiments.

As in prior experiments, participants chose between a Hershey's Hug and a Hershey's Kiss. However, in this study we asked participants to rate their feelings of savoring and anticipation prior to consumption to examine whether their feelings were driving the effect of an imposed delay (e.g., Loewenstein 1987). In particular, participants were asked, "To what extent are you currently experiencing the following emotions?" We then listed anticipation and savoring as separate items to be measured on a seven-point scale. As another way to measure savoring and anticipation, participants

also were asked, on a seven-point scale, "How many times did you visualize eating the chocolate before you got to eat it?"

In order to test hypothesis 4a, participants were asked, "How would you rate the overall experience of both waiting for and eating the chocolate?" on a scale from −7 ("disliked very much") to +7 ("liked very much"). To test hypothesis 4b, participants were asked, "The next time you buy chocolate, how likely are you to consume it immediately?" (from −7 to +7). In order to see if consumers do, in fact, experience negative utility from an imposed wait, we also asked how much participants liked or disliked waiting. In particular, they were asked, "How much did you like/dislike waiting to eat the chocolate?" (from −7 to +7). We also included the statements "I enjoyed eating the chocolate even more than usual" and "the chocolate tasted especially good today" (from +1 to +7) as additional measures of participants' retrospective evaluations of the consumption experience.

An alternative explanation for our results could be that participants are simply driven by increased hunger after a wait. To test this possibility, we asked participants, before consuming the product, "How hungry are you?" on a seven-point scale.

Results

Table 1 provides a summary of our key results. Consistent with prior studies, we found that participants who had to wait for the chocolate enjoyed it more than those who did not have to wait. Specifically, those who had to wait rated their consumption enjoyment as 4.55, while those who did not wait rated it as 3.76, consistent with hypothesis 1 for pleasant products ($F(1, 227) = 5.08$, $p < .05$).

We also examined whether delay participants, after answering several unrelated questions, would recall the increased consumption utility caused by the delay by combining the answers to the questions about whether the product was enjoyed more than usual and whether it tasted especially good ($r = 0.91$). We found that when there was an imposed wait, these measures were rated as 3.76, and when there was no wait, these measures were rated as 3.62 (NS), indicating no main effect of delay on recognition of greater consumption enjoyment.

Hypothesis 4a predicted that participants in the delay condition would rate the global experience less positively than those in the no-delay condition. Indeed, we found that those in the delay condition rated their mean global experience as 1.40, while those who did not have to wait rated this as 2.10, revealing a marginally significant effect of delay ($F(1, 227) = 3.61$, $p < .10$). Hypothesis 4b predicted that participants in the delay condition would be more likely than participants in the no-delay condition to wish to consume immediately next time. Consistent with this hypothesis, there was a significant effect of delay ($M = 2.47$ vs. 1.49; $F(1, 227) = 4.80$, $p < .05$)

Next, given the high degree of correlation between the measures of savoring and anticipation ($r = 0.93$), we used a composite score to analyze the results. Consistent with our framework, we found that savoring and anticipation were significantly higher in the delay than in the no-delay conditions ($M = 4.47$ vs. 3.62; $F(1, 227) = 6.01$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, participants in the delay condition rated the amount they visualized eating the chocolate as 2.71, while those who did not have to wait rated this as 2.06 ($F(1, 227) = 5.35$, $p < .05$). These results provide evidence that visceral factors played a role in how much consumers enjoyed consuming their choice once they received it.

TABLE 1

STUDY 3 RESULTS

	Delay	No delay
Consumption enjoyment	4.55	3.76
Enjoyed more than usual (retrospective evaluation)	3.76	3.62
Evaluation of global experience	1.40	2.10
Likeliness to consume immediately next time	2.47	1.49
Savoring/anticipation	4.47	3.62
Visualization	2.71	2.06
Enjoyment of the wait	−.89	.08

As expected, participants in the delay condition disliked waiting more than those who did not have to wait ($M = -0.89$ vs. 0.08; $F(1, 227) = 6.09$, $p < .05$), indicating that the wait was indeed unpleasant. In addition, consistent with our thinking, there was no significant effect of the delay on participants' level of hunger, suggesting that our results were not due to an alternative explanation of greater hunger for those who needed to wait than for those who did not wait ($M = 3.62$ vs. 3.60; NS).

The results of study 3 strengthen our argument that an imposed delay can increase consumption enjoyment due to greater anticipation. These results also provide support for our overall framework by showing that, despite the hedonic boost provided by a delay, consumers are not able to accurately recall this enhanced enjoyment. Therefore, participants who were required to wait did not enjoy the global experience, nor did they wish to wait in the future, as their retrospective account of the experience was driven more by the pain of the wait.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This article examined the impact that an externally imposed delay between choice and consumption has in influencing consumption enjoyment. Much of consumer research traditionally has focused on the factors that influence choice (e.g., Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998) or the utility or satisfaction resulting from hypothetical decisions. This article, in contrast, examines consumer enjoyment during the actual time of consumption. Theoretically, this research explores the idea that the utility of a consumption experience can be broken down into the utility of the event itself and the utility of the waiting period, and that these two utility levels may in fact have very different effects. First, an imposed wait

might result in increased anticipation, which can increase consumption enjoyment. Second, an imposed wait might result in increased stress, which can cause a decrease in consumption enjoyment. Our results provide evidence that the differential influence of these two factors depends on the particular characteristics of the decision task.

Our studies found that when the first factor, anticipation, is induced by either actual consumption or by an increase in the vividness of the presentation of the product awaited, an imposed wait can increase consumption enjoyment for pleasant products. We supported this hypothesis in study 1, where we found that an imposed delay increased consumption enjoyment of chocolate. We also conducted an additional study, not reported here, in which participants chose between different brands of soda in a classroom. One group then drank their choice, while the other group waited 24 hr. and were presented with their choice in class the next day. Consistent with our findings for chocolate, we also found that participants' enjoyment of soda was significantly greater after a delay. However, if visceral factors, such as anticipation, are not present, then an imposed wait can have a negative effect on consumption enjoyment due to the aversiveness of the wait itself. In support of this hypothesis, study 2 found that in cases of hypothetical consumption, participants' enjoyment of pleasant products decreased after an imposed delay. We also found in study 3 that the negative utility from a delay decreased global, retrospective evaluations of the experience. Thus, even though an imposed wait can result in an increase in consumption enjoyment under certain conditions, consumers may disregard or not be aware of this effect, and thus wish not to wait again.

Our research may contribute to the existing literature in a number of ways. First, past researchers have focused on why people choose to wait and the effects of delays on variables such as service quality, while our research examines consumer utility during actual consumption of the awaited product. Second, our research focuses on situations in which a delay is imposed on the consumer, rather than chosen. Although it is true that in many cases consumers do have the choice as to whether or not they want to delay an outcome, at other times this delay is imposed on them by external forces, such as waiting for a mail delivery. Third, much of this past research focused either on unique and highly emotional events, such as a kiss from a movie star (Loewenstein 1987), or on mundane, utilitarian service encounters, such as depositing a check (e.g., Houston et al. 1998). However, it is not clear whether these results would transfer to traditional consumer products, like a piece of chocolate or a soda. Fourth, although prior research never measured feelings of anticipation, we do so in this article to provide stronger evidence for our proposed process mechanisms. Fifth, we consider contrasting predictions from research on both waiting and anticipation and show how these accounts can be integrated by considering the consumption process in detail. Finally, we examine the accuracy with which consumers can both predict and later recognize the amount of consumption enjoyment they experience after a wait.

Our results raise the prescriptive issue of how consumers can maximize their enjoyment of a pleasurable experience for which they must wait. Prior research has suggested that consumers sometimes engage in pleasure management, where they might self-impose a delay of gratification in order to increase future pleasure (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). For example, consumers might skip lunch so as to better enjoy a special dinner. Our research suggests that for small indulgences, such as eating a piece of chocolate, consumers would not self-impose such a wait because they would not be aware of the added benefits and would focus more on the pain of waiting. However, service providers might design ways to enhance consumers' anticipation when a delay is necessary. For example, a restaurant might design a waiting area next to the kitchen, where the sights and aromas of the food might arouse consumers' anticipation levels.

Our research might also be viewed in terms of work on self-regulation (Carver and Scheier 2000). Traditionally, self-regulation research has examined the pursuit of goals, specifically, in situations where individuals can choose to delay an immediate reward in favor of a larger, delayed reward. However, future research might examine the relationship between our findings and self-regulation theory. For example, consumers might view a delay as either a positive outcome to be approached (the reward) or a negative outcome to be avoided (the wait) (Higgins 1996). Therefore, the positive effects of delay might be stronger for individuals with a promotion focus than for those with a prevention focus. In addition, our research was limited to situations where individuals chose a product and then were required to wait for it, while future studies might examine situations where participants either do not get to choose the reward and/or situations where participants choose whether to wait. Due to both ego depletion (Baumeister et al. 1998) and the endowment effect (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990), we might expect individuals who make a choice to have a harder time waiting for their product (but also enjoying it more once received) than those in a nonchoice condition.

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