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Research Review

Pleasure principles: A review of research on hedonic consumption

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Abstract

Thirty years ago, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) advocated greater attention to hedonic consumption and the myriad ways in which consumers seek pleasure and enjoyment. A thorough review finds that the topic has much appeal and that consumer research has made significant progress toward understanding some of its parameters. However, many questions remain unanswered, particularly with regard to understanding the sources of pleasure, the manner in which consumers seek it, and the ways in which consumers might alter their hedonic consumption decisions to maximize pleasure and happiness. We assess three decades of research on hedonic consumption, emphasizing areas of greatest potential for future exploration.
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Introduction

A paradox of social science is that happiness and pleasure—states that reside at the heart of human welfare, legal and religious doctrine, and biological function—have only recently begun to receive serious empirical study. A paradox of everyday life is that happiness and pleasure—states that should be easy to maximize due to the frequency and variability with which consumers pursue them and the unambiguous feedback that experience provides—are nonetheless pursued suboptimally by even the most highly motivated and capable consumers. To its credit, consumer research recognized the importance of enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness and consumption's role in obtaining them at a relatively early stage in its own history, most notably by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982; see also Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In the ensuing time, it has also taken steps to understand the latter paradox.

The 30th anniversary of Hirschman and Holbrook's article provides an occasion to reflect on the evolution and success of these efforts. We will argue that, whereas the size and trajectory of the relevant literature indicate broad recognition of the importance of the hedonic aspects of consumption, consumer researchers have been inclined to frame the issue narrowly, in part because many integral characteristics of hedonic consumption can be devilishly difficult to investigate via traditional experimental paradigms. The result has been an impressively supported set of assertions about relatively restricted aspects of hedonic consumption, an outcome that has yet to produce a full understanding of when, how, and why consumers find pleasure in the products and events they experience—but also an outcome that suggests a great deal of unrealized potential.

Defining hedonic consumption

Although there appears to be little controversy regarding the importance of hedonic consumption, the activity itself cannot be neatly circumscribed. As Hirschman and Holbrook themselves originally characterized it, hedonic consumption consists of "those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one's experience with products." Many researchers instead have adopted less expansive operationalizations that facilitate experimental inquiry but present a different set of challenges. Consider, for example, the seemingly straightforward product-based approach, which is well represented in consumer research via the distinction between utilitarian and hedonic products (e.g., Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998) or virtues and vices (e.g., Wertenbroch, 1998). A prototypically utilitarian product may possess hedonic characteristics, as when detergent is marketed based on its scent rather than its cleaning ability (Chaker, 2011); a prototypically hedonic product such as chocolate could be consumed for its cardiovascular benefits; and a product initially consumed to achieve euphoria may subsequently be consumed to reduce the unpleasant cravings caused by addiction (Linden, 2011). Consumer activities suffer the same problem, inasmuch as the same overt activity can be primarily hedonic or primarily utilitarian. Yard work may be viewed as toil or a relaxing hobby, and toil itself may be viewed as aversive or a source of satisfaction and pleasure (Crossen, 2006).

A goal-based perspective that focuses on whether the consumer is pursuing utilitarian or hedonic objectives (see Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Pham, 1998) is helpful in two ways. For one, viewing hedonic consumption as being person-driven, with products serving merely as a means to a pleasurable end, corresponds more closely to how people pursue hedonic consumption outside the lab and reflects how idiosyncratic any one consumer's pleasures may be. This perspective also supports empirical investigation by guiding research away from confounds inherent in any product-to-product comparison.

However, even this approach suffers from imprecision. Many acts of consumption are driven by some combination of utilitarian and hedonic motives, and identifying the relative strength of each can be a daunting task. A single product (e.g., a smartphone or computer) can simultaneously help its user pursue dual utilitarian and hedonic goals. In addition, researchers must carefully consider distinctions between means and ends. An aesthetically pleasing flowerbed may entail strenuous labor, just as post-exercise contentment is achieved through painful exertion; conversely, a properly functioning lawnmower (and the renewed obligation to use it) may result from hours of happy tinkering. As we later elaborate, the means–ends distinction is fundamental to the understanding of pleasure, and misconstrual of the source of pleasure, i.e., the means versus the end, may partially account for people's misguided pursuit of it.

Finally, a motivational perspective raises the question of what it means to achieve a hedonic objective. Consider two moviegoers watching the same comedy in the same theater, one of whom laughs uproariously and the other of whom barely smiles. It seems inappropriate to characterize the latter consumer's theater visit as utilitarian, but neither does it conform to a conventional sense of a hedonic experience—despite the motive to have one. It would be similarly curious to regard the use of antidepressants as a hedonic experience, even though they were taken with the intention of achieving greater happiness (or, at least, reduced sadness). To complicate matters further, happiness itself can be experienced in multiple ways, including by way of feelings as divergent as excitement and calm (Mogilner, Aaker, &

Kamvar, 2012; see also Kim, Park, & Schwarz, 2010). Two consumers may drink identical cups of coffee, one to provide a boost in energy during a stressful workday and the other to facilitate a relaxing afternoon among friends.

These examples should not be dismissed as merely hypothetical, inasmuch as the same motivational ambiguities are apparent in the literature. Consider the seemingly utilitarian activity of price shopping, which can be pleasurable for a variety of non-monetary reasons, including those pertaining to the entertainment value of shopping (e.g., Ailawadi, Neslin, & Gedenk, 2001), the consumer's self-image regarding expertise or mavenism (e.g., Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993), or even the simple pleasure of getting a good deal (e.g., Jin & Sternquist, 2004). Alternatively, consider some particularly risky leisure pursuits, such as whitewater rafting and kayaking, skydiving, and gambling (Arnould & Price, 1993; Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993; Cotte, 1997; Hopkinson & Pujari, 1999). Aside from pleasure- and thrill-seeking, consumption of these activities is motivated by a need for group membership or a sense of community, self-expression, and personal growth and achievement. Even relatively mundane consumption behaviors can be multiply motivated by a desire for adventure, social interaction, mood enhancement, and altruism (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; see also Sherry, 1990). Moreover, some have characterized value-expressive motives as possessing both hedonic and utilitarian aspects (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000). These various findings recall longstanding research on the symbolic nature of consumption, in which "hedonic goods" are purchased for the non-hedonic objectives of status-seeking or identity-signaling (Belk, 1988; Levy, 1959; for more recent developments, see Ariely & Levav, 2000; Berger & Heath, 2007; Berger & Ward, 2010; Ferraro, Shiv, & Bettman, 2005; Ratner & Kahn, 2002).

Numerous psychometric investigations have validated the hedonic–utilitarian product distinction, although the results are less than unequivocal. On the one hand, discriminant validity is routinely reported (e.g., Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Bohm & Pfister, 1996; Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001; Crowley, Spangenberg, & Hughes, 1992; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003). Face validity is also high—with hedonic products being perceived as relatively more fun, enjoyable, and pleasant, and utilitarian products being perceived as relatively more functional, necessary, and effective—and there appears to be consensus that consumption can be distinguished along instrumental/cognitive versus emotional/affective lines (see also Millar & Tesser, 1986a). On the other hand, these same reports acknowledge not only the anecdotal murkiness exemplified above but also messiness in the measurement outcomes themselves, with discriminant validity achieving uncomfortably low and inconsistent levels across scales and researchers. Furthermore, these formal studies are understandably more likely to construe consumption at an abstract level rather than in an episodic and context-specific form. For example, relative to a concert or a bottle of wine, a cellphone may be viewed as utilitarian. Over the course of a day, however, that same phone may swing between being a tool and being a toy.

None of these conceptual or empirical difficulties should be entirely surprising, inasmuch as Hirschman and Holbrook themselves acknowledged that true hedonic consumption lacks clear defining features. However, whereas lay people may be content with a Stewartesque standard of knowing hedonic consumption when they see it, most researchers seek clear operationalizations, precise measures, and high levels of experimental control, the result of which is a consumer literature that sacrifices richness for rigor. For example, many programs of research examine consumer response to pieces of candy or snippets of songs rather than the vacations, concerts, and massages that reside further along the hedonic continuum and are more effective and important generators of consumer enjoyment. Thus, insofar as hedonic consumption is characterized by "multisensory images, fantasies and emotional arousal in using products" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982), consumer research has largely failed to capture it.

Despite the numerous scholarly efforts to delineate the topic, we suggest that a lay definition may provide the most broadly encompassing and intuitively appealing approach. A vital component of hedonic consumption is whether the experience of consuming the product or event is pleasurable. In fact, one might argue that, regardless of whether the consumption serves a practical purpose or is pursued on its own merits, whether it happens volitionally or by happenstance, and whether it is compared to other forms of consumption or is examined on its own, a universal and essential feature of hedonic consumption is that it is (and is expected to be) pleasurable. The remainder of our discussion uses pleasure as a guidepost and is organized around the two paradoxes noted at the outset; that is, we explore what accounts for pleasure, and how consumers attempt to pursue pleasure (and, in so doing, why consumers may fail to pursue pleasure optimally).

Sources and determinants of pleasure

A focus on the experience of pleasure leads inevitably to questions of what provides and causes pleasure. The answer is less than straightforward, as witnessed by the broadly different perspectives taken in the literature. Some experiences are inherently pleasurable and are more pleasurable than others, a view consistent with the comparative approaches that contrast hedonic to utilitarian consumption. Sweet, fatty, or salty foods tend to be more enjoyable than bitter, bland, or sour ones; consonant music is more enjoyable than dissonant music; experiences that are funny or exciting are more pleasing than those that are serious or dull. We can speculate that pleasure is evolutionarily developed, genetically coded, and chemically implemented (Linden, 2011; Wallenstein, 2009), but this insight does little to advance the cause of traditional consumer psychology. Fortunately, understanding the interaction between pleasure and products is not intractable (see, e.g., Noble & Kumar, 2010) and may be ripe for investigation at multiple levels.

In the following section we discuss some sources and determinants of pleasure that are less intuitive and more inspiring than those that are purely sensory. We sort these sources and

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determinants of pleasure into two general categories: the product or event (and its inherent qualities), and the consumer's personal experience with or interpretation of the product or event. We believe that this dichotomy is a useful one for researchers and practitioners alike. However, the profound and profoundly difficult task of defining pleasure does force us to impose our own constraints. We do not intend to equate pleasure with either satisfaction or happiness. The former is more closely tied to how well product experience meets expectations rather than the inherent pleasure of that experience. The latter is the subject of a burgeoning literature often encountered in the realm of positive psychology (e.g., Diener, 2000; Seligman, 2002). Happiness can surely stem from consumption, as recent research on money, income, and spending habits has shown (see Dunn, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2011, and attendant commentaries), but much of the research on this equally profound topic has been more concerned with general life satisfaction and happiness than with particular product choices or consumption episodes, to which we next turn.

Pleasure in the product

In addition to physiologically driven pleasures, there are many features of products that consumers find to be psychologically pleasurable, including—but not limited to—the thought, care, or style put into a product and even what a product's basic essence is perceived to be with regard to its purity and authenticity.

Aesthetics and design

One approach to pleasure takes a design-based perspective. The most prominent popular proponent of pleasurable design is Norman (2004), who argues for three different levels of processing or understanding of products and product features. Whereas the visceral level is a hard-wired response primarily to physical product features that conforms most closely to the common understanding of aesthetic response (i.e., the product's design and form), the behavioral level encompasses function, performance, and usability, and the reflective level—most novel from a design perspective—includes meaning and interpretation. All three levels of processing can be pleasurable in their own ways, as when the enjoyment a user gets from an iPad arises not only from its attractiveness but also how easy it is to use and how futuristic it seems to be. Similarly, Jordan (2000) proposes four types of product pleasures: (a) physio-pleasures, emanating from the senses, (b) socio-pleasures, emanating from interpersonal and group relationships, (c) psycho-pleasures, emanating from one's emotional and cognitive reactions to product use, and (d) ideo-pleasures, emanating more broadly from product meanings and personal values.

Consumer research has focused primarily on the consequences of hedonic consumption, rather than its antecedents and determinants, leaving room to examine what Norman's and Jordan's structures reveal about hedonic consumption decisions and experiences. For example, consumer research has historically paid only scant attention to deeper product features that drive visceral aesthetic responses or sensory pleasure (see Hoegg & Alba, 2008 and Krishna, 2012, for discussions). Aesthetics are occasionally manipulated with the intent of examining their effect on important consumer responses, but investigations into the specific aesthetic factors that prompt consumption have been either tightly focused on specific features such as proportion (Raghubir & Greenleaf, 2006) or harmony (Kumar & Garg, 2010), or have been broad and exploratory (e.g., Joy & Sherry, 2003; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2008), with neither shedding light on aesthetically driven pleasure, per se. Behavioral design and psycho-pleasures may similarly be viewed as beyond our boundaries (with some recent notable exceptions; see, e.g., Noseworthy & Trudel, 2011; Thompson, Hamilton, & Rust, 2005), although there is precedent for examining product mastery (see below). Perhaps the most frequent connection between pleasurable product design frameworks and hedonic consumption is to reflective design (Norman), and socio- and ideo-pleasure (Jordan), which will be echoed in our discussion of nostalgia, product essences, and flow and flourishing, topics that involve the interaction of design, meaning, and pleasure.

Consumer research has recently provided compelling evidence for the importance of aesthetics in consumer decision making by demonstrating that consumers attend to aesthetics both beyond the margin of their decision processes and within product categories that are not purely aesthetic (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a; Reimann, Zaichkowsky, Neuhaus, Bender, & Weber, 2010; Townsend & Shu, 2010). For instance, aesthetics may not always be enjoyed in and of itself, but instead appreciated in context through its influence on other product-related dimensions, as when the placement of artwork on a product or package changes the perceived luxury of the brand. Perceptions of luxury and the pleasure that results from those perceptions, whether induced via artwork or otherwise, in turn may prompt consumers to be more cognitively accommodating, more prone to affect-based than cognition-based processing, and therefore more accepting of brand extensions into distant categories (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008b, 2009; see also Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991).

In addition, hedonic reactions to aesthetic features can overwhelm utilitarian calculations even among products not typically considered to be hedonic products. When consumers face a choice between a hedonically superior option (i.e., one with superior aesthetic and design features) that fails to meet functional criteria and a functionally superior option that is less appealing hedonically, the latter is unsurprisingly favored; however, when both options exceed basic functional and hedonic requirements, the hedonically superior option is favored (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2007). Similarly, when consumers are confident about a product's functional utility, they may prefer aesthetically more interesting designs (Noseworthy & Trudel, 2011). Consistent outcomes are observed in consumer's affective response to consumption. When the product meets or exceeds utilitarian criteria, consumers experience satisfaction; when a product meets or exceeds hedonic criteria, consumers experience excitement and delight, become more loyal, and are more inclined to engage in positive word of mouth (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008). These results add useful complexity to design tools such as the Kano model (see Cohen, 1995) by suggesting, for instance, that firms can increase customer excitement or delight by promoting aesthetic and other hedonic qualities of their products.

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Having versus doing

An intriguing but curiously under-pursued determinant of long-term enjoyment is the nature of consumption itself. A recent survey of retirees' general happiness revealed that the only type of consumption activity to play a role was leisure consumption (DeLeire & Kalil, 2010). At a more abstract level, the issue can be framed in terms of whether people derive more happiness from consuming possessions or experiences. Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) contend that experience bestows the greater amount of happiness, despite the fact that possessions remain in people's lives whereas experiences are temporary. One of several arguments in favor of this assertion involves the notion that a material possession is static, and pleasure derived from it is subject to relatively rapid adaptation. In contrast, experiences are intangible, existing only in the consumer's mind once completed and subject to an apparently slower rate of adaptation (e.g., Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009). Further, positive past experiences may become even more positive through elaboration-driven polarization (e.g., Van Boven, 2005; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Irritants may also be minimized or forgotten, leading to fond recollections and a willingness to repurchase or re-experience (Klaaren, Hodges, & Wilson, 1994). Likewise, recent work on the regrets prompted by material and experiential purchases suggests that material purchases are related to regrets of action, which are more likely to be experienced in the short-term, whereas experiential purchases prompt regrets of inaction, which are more likely to be experienced in the long-term (e.g., Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Experiences are also more likely to be social and to be discussed with others, both of which can increase enjoyment of positive experiences (e.g., Raghunathan & Corfman, 2006), whereas people who make and discuss material purchases may be stigmatized by others (e.g., Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010). In addition, experiential purchases are less subject to comparisons that could diminish enjoyment of them than are material purchases. It is easier, for instance, to compare the features of one car with the features of another than it is to compare the beauty of one beach with the beauty of another (Carter & Gilovich, 2010).

A different but related approach asks whether people are made happier by a change in their circumstances (e.g., a pay raise or a move) versus a change in their "activities" (e.g., an exercise plan or a new hobby). Paralleling the distinction between material and experiential purchases, evidence suggests an analogously lesser impact from changes in circumstances than changes in activities (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Happiness with life changes also declines more precipitously for circumstances than for activities (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). As in comparisons of having versus doing, the rationale is that circumstances are relatively more static and therefore more subject to adaptation, whereas activities are more modifiable and offer greater diversity of experience.

Essences

The idea that the pleasure consumers feel due to a hedonic event is determined in part by the meaning they associate with it has been taken to a more extreme and speculative point by Bloom (2010), who argues that things are believed to "have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly and it is this hidden nature that really matters" (p. 9). Moreover, the "pleasure we get from many things and activities is based in part on what we see as their essences. … it underlies our passions, our appetites, and our desires." (p. 22). Thus, food and wine taste better when identified with a prestigious name that implies a higher level of essential quality; we derive greater pleasure from an original work of art by a master than from an indistinguishable reproduction; we enjoy a piece of music more when we know the performer is a famous virtuoso than not; we are hesitant to eat food that has been genetically modified; and we prize artifacts that have been touched by famous people (e.g., Bloom, 2010; Newman, Diesendruck, & Bloom, 2011). Intuition suggests that "essence" or authenticity may also be implicated in the affection with which people embrace products and brands experienced early in life (Fusilli, 2012; Lindstrom, 2011).

Bloom views the phenomenon of essentialism to be universal, suggesting that the pleasure one derives from any particular stimulus will depend on how one interprets its essence, and that altered essences can lead to altered experience. As Rozin (1999) notes, "Almost everything an adult likes or dislikes is at least partly an acquired taste ([or] distaste)" (p. 119). As we discuss next, what consumers believe or are told about a product can have a deep influence on the enjoyment and pleasure they experience upon consumption.

Pleasure from person–product interactions

The notion that tastes can be acquired highlights the fact that consumers can serve as "moderators" of pleasure through their idiosyncratic reactions to product experiences. We highlight two particular domains in which the pleasure a consumer experiences results from an interaction between the consumer's psychological profile and the inherent nature of the event: the consumer's expectations of the product and the consumer's engagement with the product. We acknowledge that many personality traits also can influence a consumer's experience with a product, such as their tendency toward indulgence or responsibility (e.g., Haws & Poynor, 2008) and the importance they place on aesthetics (e.g., Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003), but we focus on moderators that speak primarily to the nature of consumer pleasure rather than the nature of the consumer.

Pleasure from expectations

Expectations naturally guide consumers' choices (see below), but they also less obviously determine the extent to which consumers eventually enjoy their outcomes. Further, as we will discuss, expectations may influence pleasure both during the consumption episode as well as before and after it occurs.

Beliefs about consumption. Consumers are known to express a degree of pleasure with an object or experience that corresponds to their expectations for pleasure with that object or experience. Wilson and Klaaren's (1992) Affective Expectation Model posits

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that people's affective reactions to stimuli are formed in reference to their expectations of those stimuli, such that their expectations often determine their emotional reactions. As subsequent research has borne out, the more consumers expect to like objects and experiences, including entertainment (Wilson, Lisle, Kraft, & Wetzel, 1989), food and drink (Lee, Frederick, & Ariely, 2006), and clothing (Hoch & Ha, 1986), the more they do like them once they experience them. A key issue has been whether that pleasure also corresponds to underlying changes in sensation and perception, or whether consumers are merely claiming pleasure rather than experiencing it. Research suggests that marketing interventions can influence the attention consumers devote to different dimensions of the product, which in turn will influence their evaluations (Elder & Krishna, 2010; Hoch & Ha, 1986) and, moreover, that this influence may extend to perceptual discrimination (Hoegg & Alba, 2007) and sensory enjoyment (Lee et al., 2006). Indeed, recent evidence demonstrates that product information such as brand name (e.g., McClure et al., 2004) or price (e.g., Plassmann, O'Doherty, Shiv, & Rangel, 2008) affects pleasure at a neural level, indicating that expectation-driven pleasure is experienced rather than merely claimed.

From the perspective of everyday hedonic consumption, however, this distinction may be less important. If consumers believe they enjoy an experience more when marketing cues raise expectations than when they do not, the experience is enjoyable irrespective of whether sensory perceptions were truly altered. If consumers experience greater joy from a cartoon because they are told they will (Wilson et al., 1989), enjoy a beverage because they know its brand name (Nevid, 1981), or savor an expensive wine despite an inability to discriminate it from a less expensive wine (Mlodinow, 2009), they are nonetheless experiencing greater pleasure, regardless of its cause. (Of course, consumer researchers may still wish to probe the accuracy of consumers' hedonic reactions and the costs they incur to achieve their desired hedonic states [e.g., Raghunathan, Naylor, & Hoyer, 2006].)[1]

Savoring. Consumers are known to savor their memories of enjoyable and meaningful experiences. They show a desire to preserve special memories (Zauberman, Ratner, & Kim, 2008), a goal that presupposes that memories provide utility and that is consistent with the finding that nostalgia is socially and attitudinally reinforcing (e.g., Loveland, Smeesters, & Mandel, 2008; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006). This desire is apparently so strong that consumers not only try to procure memorabilia or souvenirs of meaningful experiences but also refrain from re-experiencing special events so as not to do harm to their recollection. Nostalgia can influence product evaluation as well. When prompted by an ad to recall a previous personally relevant hedonic event (e.g., an intimate dining experience), consumers' judgments of the brand featured in the ad become more positive, have a more affective and less cognitive foundation, and are insensitive to the quality of evidence supporting the brand's virtue (Sujan, Bettman, & Baumgartner, 1993). Nostalgia also appears to increase consumers' inclinations to donate to charity, as it engenders greater feelings of empathy toward those in need (Zhou, Wildschut, Sedikides, Shi, & Feng, 2012). Consumers even show a desire to collect novel and unusual experiences, at the expense of more familiar and expectedly enjoyable experiences (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011), in part so that they can enjoy recalling or recounting them later.

Consumers can savor experiences in prospect as well as in retrospect, a recognized yet underexplored aspect of hedonic consumption (e.g., Elster & Loewenstein, 1992). Folk wisdom claims that "anticipation is better than realization." There is evidence that this folk wisdom stands up to scrutiny, although not universally. The first empirical demonstration of savoring the future revealed that, unlike for monetary outcomes, people prefer to wait some period of time to experience desired events (e.g., a kiss from one's favorite celebrity, a fancy meal) rather than consume them immediately, although the value of waiting eventually decreases (Loewenstein, 1987). Subsequent research demonstrated similar effects in the domain of gambling, such that the more valuable the outcome of a gamble, the longer people were inclined to delay learning about the outcome (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2000). Beyond the perceived value of a delay, the sheer emotional experience of anticipating an event is also more intense than relevant post-event emotional experiences (Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007).

One can also find traces of savoring in consumers' preference for sequences of outcomes of unequal attractiveness. People prefer sequences that increase in attractiveness (e.g., Loewenstein & Prelec, 1991, 1993) and, under some circumstances, even prefer to place payment before benefits so that the pain of payment is decoupled from the anticipated enjoyment of the experience (Prelec & Loewenstein, 1998). In essence, people prefer a happy ending (e.g., Ross & Simonson, 1991). When hedonic events are controllable, consumers prefer to space good outcomes over time, thereby lengthening the period of anticipation (e.g., Loewenstein & Prelec, 1993). At a general level, consumers are more sensitive to the pattern of change leading to the final outcome for consummatory activities and experiences, whereas their satisfaction with instrumental activities is driven more by the absolute value of the final outcome (Hsee, Abelson, & Salovey, 1991).

Waiting is a common and related consumer experience. Although imposed delays can enhance enjoyment, the effect of such delays is opaque to consumers, as evidenced by their expressed preference for more immediate consumption (Nowlis, Mandel, & McCabe, 2004). When consumers are motivated and free to choose, they experience the highest levels of anticipated enjoyment with medium-length waits, which are long enough for them to build up some anticipation, but not so long that irritation

[1] Marketing scholars and practitioners have been keenly interested in the role of expectations from the perspective of customer satisfaction (e.g., Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002), because it is widely thought that unmet expectations lead to dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980). However, satisfaction should not be equated with pleasure, and contrast effects in experience might be rarer than assumed (e.g., Geers & Lassiter, 1999), in part because consumers often assimilate to their expectations, and in part because experience is often enjoyed on its own merits rather than in comparison to expectations or to other experiences (e.g., Morewedge, Gilbert, Myrseth, Kassam, & Wilson, 2010; Novemsky & Ratner, 2003). Expectations do seem to predict both consumers' recalled experience and their intention to re-experience the same event or object (Klaaren et al., 1994). Still, it seems likely that one could both enjoy an experience and be disappointed by it.

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can set in (Chan & Mukhopadhyay, 2010). However, post-consumption enjoyment is lowest at medium wait times, presumably because expectations are highest when wait times are in the middle and disappointment is more likely.

Finally, consumers may anticipate not only the onset of a hedonic experience but also its absence. While engaged in a hedonic experience, awareness of its alternative may prompt consumers to relish it all the more, especially if they do not focus on its termination point (Zhao & Tsai, 2011). Generally, feeling uncertain about how long a positive event will last makes the experience that much more intense (e.g., Bar-Anan, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2009). Indeterminate causes and outcomes of pleasurable events can likewise increase or prolong consumers' enjoyment of them in the moment (e.g., Vosgerau, Wertenbroch, & Carmon, 2006; Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, & Gilbert, 2005).

Pleasure from engagement

Lastly, the degree to which consumers enjoy a product or experience can depend on the degree to which they are involved in the consumption experience. Specialized knowledge can reveal aspects of a product or event to be enjoyed that are unknown to novices. However, even novices can benefit from engagement such that their pleasure with consumption is amplified both in the moment and in retrospect.

Expertise. Just as the number of product-related experiences a consumer undergoes is not necessarily related to the ability to perform product-related tasks (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), the hedonic response that mere aficionados experience in a domain may not match the hedonic response true experts receive from their mastery of that domain (LaTour & LaTour, 2010). Mastery itself can evolve in the realms of both declarative and procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1976). Consumer research has focused more on the former, although neither has received sufficient attention. Declarative knowledge is represented by research on "consumption vocabularies" (West, Brown, & Hoch, 1996). This work demonstrates that development of a vocabulary regarding product experience allows for greater ability to discriminate across alternatives, more stable preferences, and more resilient attitudes (Lageat, Czellar, & Laurent, 2003; LaTour & LaTour, 2010; West et al., 1996). In light of Redden's (2008) finding that more finely differentiated experiences are associated with reduced satiation, a reasonable conjecture within the context of hedonic consumption is that declarative knowledge can result in a more stimulating and longer lasting experience. A key question concerns the effects of such knowledge on affective response. Anecdotal evidence suggests, for example, that wine experts relish the task of tasting, comparing, and evaluating different wines and receive much greater utility from the task than do non-experts. Research suggests that consideration of a greater number of sensory dimensions can enhance product evaluation (Elder & Krishna, 2010). However, common knowledge also suggests that experts are more discerning and demanding and therefore less tolerant of substandard experiences. The extremity of one's hedonic evaluations are therefore likely to be a function not only of the complexity of the product but also the complexity of the consumer (Linville, 1982; Millar & Tesser, 1986b) and the consumer's situational capacity to be discerning (Shiv & Nowlis, 2004).

Research on procedural knowledge is relatively sparse but consistent with intuition. Consumers derive greater enjoyment from an activity as their proficiency with it increases (Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva, & Greenleaf, 1984), and discontinuous improvements associated with feelings of insight provide particularly high increases in affinity for a product (Lakshmanan & Krishnan, 2011). Proficiency reduces frustration, which should enhance utilitarian and hedonic experiences alike. However, Murray and Bellman (2011) speculate that the efficiency gains produced by mastery operate differently in the utilitarian and hedonic spheres. Whereas proficiency simply reduces the time it takes to complete a utilitarian task, it works to increase the amount of enjoyment that can be obtained in any given time interval from hedonic activities. Consumers who fail to appreciate these dynamics may prematurely abandon potentially fruitful hedonic pursuits.

Although the preceding research deals with the consumer's mastery of a domain, pleasure is also derived from appreciation of others' mastery. Indeed, Kubovy (1999) suggests that perceived virtuosity and the sense of perfection can inspire pleasure. The transcendent appreciation of another person's extraordinary talent, or the extreme beauty of certain art, music, and architecture, has been theorized to produce awe, a rare but meaningful emotion that can produce not only enjoyment but a new understanding of the world at large, and of oneself (Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

Flow and flourishing. The introduction of meaning into aesthetic design, as discussed by Jordan (2000) and Norman (2004), is a welcome insight into pleasure. However, meaning can exist at multiple levels, and its aesthetic operationalization might be considered to be at a relatively shallow level. Meaning considered in a deeper way leads to a more fundamental consideration of the term "pleasure" itself. Over the past three decades, social scientists have delved into the relationship (and, at times, lack of relationship) between pleasure and happiness and, moreover, between happiness and well-being (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2001). The result has not been an outright denial of the importance of transient pleasure but rather a recognition that consumers' goals may rise above mere self-indulgence or momentary fun. Thus, whereas research on hedonic consumption has struggled with the distinction between hedonic and utilitarian pursuits, hedonic consumption itself can result in pleasure as well as a deeper kind of enjoyment, rising even to the level of fulfillment—outcomes that can be captured in the processes of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and flourishing (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Seligman, 2011). The former, not unfamiliar to consumer psychologists, is characterized by deep immersion in an activity to the exclusion of other thought. The latter is a newer, more encompassing, and more multidimensional construct characterized not only by positive emotion and engagement but also the meaning, accomplishment, and social relationships engendered by an activity.

Both flow and flourishing offer multiple demonstrations of the fundamental differences between superficial pleasure and

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deeper enjoyment. Many things are momentarily pleasurable but hardly meaningful, ennobling, or consistent with well-being (e.g., cigarettes, alcohol, and narcotics). A subtler but nonetheless intuitive demonstration of the distinction involves the moment at which the feeling is experienced. Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman agree that pleasure and happiness occur in the moment, whereas the fulfilling kind of enjoyment they propose is retrospective, but in a reflective rather than nostalgic sense. Focused involvement banishes not only unrelated thoughts but also potentially distracting feelings about the activity itself, such that the individual recognizes and labels the activity as enjoyable only at some point after its completion. Finally, it is even possible to flourish without an abundance of positive emotion when accomplishment is the dominating characteristic of flourishing. Activities that fall under the heading of labor can be emotionally satisfying—and more motivating than material gain—if imbued with meaning and a sense of progress (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Consequently, consumers who engage in deliberate and direct pursuits of happiness may wind up pursuing the wrong activities and experiences and missing those that might give them greater life satisfaction (Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011).

When viewed through the lenses of immersion, meaning, and accomplishment, it becomes apparent that hedonic consumption should not be defined solely by the magnitude of the hedonic event (e.g., truffle vs. opera consumption) but should also incorporate the way the consumer approaches the event. Hedonic products like food, art, music, and sports can be consumed at a sensory level, a deeper structural level, or anywhere in between—and the level at which such activities engage a consumer can determine whether the outcome is pleasure, enjoyment, or well-being. Indeed, any activity, whether work or play, can induce flow depending on the consumer's level of involvement and analysis.

Seeking (and finding?) pleasure

Many pleasures are obtained and experienced passively: consumers receive chocolates and other gifts, see an amusing commercial while watching the news, and stumble upon beautiful sunsets and sweeping vistas. However, as emphasized by Hirschman and Holbrook, consumers also seek out pleasurable products and experiences, and researchers have actively sought to understand how and when consumers decide to seek that pleasure. The remaining discussion examines research on how consumers decide to pursue hedonic consumption. Consumer research on this question has tended to focus on relatively small-bore questions relating primarily to consumers' willingness to "indulge." In so doing, it has also commonly adopted paradigms that make direct hedonic-to-utilitarian comparisons, described variously in the literature in terms of virtues versus vices (e.g., Wertenbroch, 1998), shoulds versus wants (e.g., Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, & Wade-Benzoni, 1998), and necessities versus luxuries (e.g., Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a, 2002b; see Khan, Dhar, & Wertenbroch, 2005, for an elaborated discussion of these and related distinctions). We draw on this work, as well as work from outside strict consumer domains, to illuminate consumer decision making regarding hedonic consumption.

Judging future pleasure

We begin with a note about maximizing happiness: any discussion of decision making requires consideration of how well those decisions are made, and thus how effectively those decisions meet consumers' wants or needs. Consumers make decisions about pursuing hedonic consumption based on what they expect will be pleasurable (most pleasurable, especially), for a desirable amount of time (the longest, in particular). They will do so "accurately" to the extent that their expectations and beliefs are calibrated. Research on affective forecasting is perhaps the best known examination of how predictions of future enjoyment and happiness are made and how accurate those predictions are. This work typically finds that people overestimate the duration (e.g., Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg, & Wheatley, 2002) and intensity (e.g., Buehler & McFarland, 2001) of their affective reactions to both negative events (Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg, & Wheatley, 1998) and positive events (Wilson, Wheatley, Meyers, Gilbert, & Axsom, 2000; see also Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2006), suggesting that miscalibration is quite common. Such misforecasts have been attributed to a variety of causes, including a disproportionate focus on the central event at the expense of extenuating circumstances (e.g., Wilson et al., 2000), insensitivity to the psychological tendency to lessen the impact of negative events on our psychological health (e.g., Gilbert et al., 1998) and make sense of more positive events (Wilson et al., 2005), and over-reliance on lay theories (e.g., Igou, 2004), normative rules (Wood & Bettman, 2007), or current physical states (e.g., Loewenstein, 1996).

The obvious importance of both the ability to forecast future pleasure correctly and understanding of when and why consumers fall short has inspired a great deal of research and, subsequently, several insightful and integrative treatments (e.g., Hsee & Hastie, 2006; Hsee & Tsai, 2008; Loewenstein & Schkade, 1999; MacInnis, Patrick, & Park, 2006; Wilson & Gilbert, 2003, 2005). Of note here is that, although the misforecasting of pleasure is common (e.g., Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003), forecasting error may at times be attenuated in the case of positive events (e.g., Finkenauer, Gallucci, van Dijk, & Pollmann, 2007). When pleasure is the focus, the literature has also emphasized differences between the predicted and actual duration of the impact of events on one's happiness, with the result that people typically overestimate the persistence of a blessing's effect in prospect (e.g., Wilson et al., 2000) and consequently "miswant" that blessing to occur (Gilbert & Wilson, 2005). Duration itself, as it pertains to the scope of consumer behavior, merits more attention from consumer researchers. The forecasting literature has examined both the "smaller scale" happiness in specific response to the event as well as a hedonic event's impact on overall happiness in life. The former appears more relevant to a traditional view of hedonic consumption, with the central question concerning the accuracy with which consumers forecast happiness with their purchase (Wang, Novemsky, & Dhar, 2009). Still, per our discussion of experiential versus material purchases (e.g., Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), people also consume in order to transform their lives and bring lasting happiness. Understanding the types of purchases that consumers expect will achieve these

objectives, as well as the accuracy of those expectations, is vital to improving consumers' lives.

Research on affective forecasting has largely been more interested in the determinants of the predictions people make and how well those predictions match reality than it is in the consequences of those (mismatched) predictions. In contrast, the manner in which people make choices regarding hedonic consumption has been a particular focus of consumer research, with the emphasis on how consumers choose a pleasurable experience over a more utilitarian one, a different pleasurable experience, or no alternative experience. It is these choices to which we now turn.

Present as prologue

Consumers' judgments of future enjoyment are often based on present feelings. Features of the present, however, can skew predictions and thus decisions, for good or for ill.

Satiation and adaptation

As implied by our discussion of affective forecasting, consumers readily habituate to consumption experiences, and thus readily satiate or adapt to them. Satiation and variety-seeking are well-studied phenomena within marketing, due to their obvious managerial relevance to brand switching and brand loyalty. Perhaps because it lacks an inflection point that can prompt switching, research on adaptation is not as extensive and is particularly sparse with regard to expectations of adaptation. One recent effort indicates that consumers expect enjoyment to decline with repeated experience, but they apparently do not spontaneously incorporate these beliefs into their predictions of enjoyment, (Wang et al., 2009; see also Ubel, Loewenstein, & Jepson, 2005). If incorporated, the impact of such expectations on prediction and behavior should depend on whether consumers over- or underestimate the rate of adaptation (see Patrick, MacInnis, & Park, 2007; Pollai, Hoelzl, & Possas, 2010)—a question that may not yield a simple answer, as it is likely determined by idiosyncratic aspects of the specific purchase and time frame (e.g., Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999).

The question of how well the experience and the expectation of satiation match up has been more thoroughly examined. One stream of research largely pertains to repeat purchase and has evolved into an investigation of real-versus-expected satiation. A fundamental finding is that consumers do not accurately forecast their own feelings of satiation, misestimating the degree to which their enjoyment of an object will decrease the more they consume it (Kahneman & Snell, 1992; Read & Loewenstein, 1995; Simonson, 1990). Inman (2001) asserted that satiation and variety-seeking occur at the sensory level (rather than at other attribute levels, such as brand) and therefore may be particularly pertinent to hedonic products, inasmuch as it is typically the sensory features of a product like flavor or scent that directly determine enjoyment rather than broader ones like product category or brand. This assertion is supported empirically by Inman's discovery that consumers are more likely to seek variety across varieties of a brand than across brands. Consumers frequently over-predict satiation to positive experiences, which results in over-pursuing variety and a reduction of the total utility they might obtain from those purchases. A primary reason for such misforecasts involves people's pervasive lay theories—or "meta-hedonic" beliefs—regarding pleasure and pain (Igou, 2004; Snell, Gibbs, & Varey, 1995). Consumers correctly anticipate satiation from continual or continuous usage but may misjudge the point at which satiation will occur (e.g., Ratner, Kahn, & Kahneman, 1999; Wang et al., 2009), particularly when consumption is distributed over an extended time frame (Galak, Kruger, & Loewenstein, 2011).[2]

When the intervals widen and the degree of similarity between the events is relaxed only slightly, consumers may instead fail to anticipate satiation or seek variety when they should. Consider, for example, projection bias, wherein consumers "behave as if their future preferences will be more like their current preferences than they actually will be" (Loewenstein & Angner, 2003). Such "presentism" will lead consumers to underestimate satiation (Gilbert, Gill, & Wilson, 2002). A form of presentism may also be manifested in the emotions experienced in anticipation of a hedonic event. Evidence suggests that anticipated emotions maybe more intense than retrieved emotions of the same or a similar event, even when the event has been experienced repeatedly in the past (Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007). Over a still longer term, projection bias may be reflected in consumers' failure to recognize that their tastes have changed through experience or maturation. If, at a later time, consumers do recognize that their tastes have changed, they may abandon long-term plans, or risk disappointment by ill-advisedly engaging in nostalgia-driven attempts to relive a past experience that no longer corresponds to their present tastes.

Because pleasure is diminished by repeated experience, consumers are practiced in seeking novelty and variety, and the variety-seeking literature is correspondingly robust and long-standing (e.g., Kahn, 1995; McAlister & Pessemier, 1982). However, introducing variety into consumption is not the only way in which consumers can reduce satiation. Satiation appears to have a substantial psychological component (e.g., Morewedge, Huh, & Vosgerau, 2010), and thus pleasure can be increased simply through conscious consideration of past consumption variety—although it appears that consumers rarely engage in such retrospection spontaneously (Galak, Redden, & Kruger, 2009). Further, consumers prefer assortments in which variety is

[2] Lay theories appear to underlie a wide variety of hedonic misforecasts beyond mere adaptation and satiety. For example, lay theories may lead consumers to overestimate the likely effect of contrast effects on experienced pleasure (Novemsky & Ratner, 2003; see also Morewedge, Huh, & Vosgerau, 2010), overestimate the likely effect of psychological distance on their emotional reactions (Ebert & Meyvis, in preparation), mispredict the affective consequences of interrupted hedonic consumption (Nelson & Meyvis, 2008), assess their experienced enjoyment of an episode based on its perceived duration (Sackett, Meyvis, Nelson, Converse, & Sackett, 2010), allow perceived healthiness of food to influence judgments of tastiness (Raghunathan et al., 2006), and incorrectly predict enjoyment of an indulgence based on whether its consumption can be justified (Xu & Schwarz, 2009).

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easier to perceive (Kahn & Wansink, 2004). Consumers can also increase their pleasure with consumption by categorizing it at deeper levels of refinement such that variation within the category is made salient and consumers' focus is turned toward the characteristics that differentiate the category members (Redden, 2008), or by simply slowing down their rate of consumption (e.g., Galak et al., 2011; Galak, Kruger, & Loewenstein, forthcoming).

Visceral states

Desire for and decisions about a wide variety of products and experiences are driven by physiological drive states, including hunger, thirst, sexual arousal, curiosity, and cravings. The pressure imposed by this variety of states is difficult to appreciate when in a state of satiation because their inherent physiological components are difficult or impossible to recreate—even though these drives may have been experienced numerous times in the past. As such, very costly errors can arise due to consumers' well-documented inability to predict the motivational impetus of a future drive state when currently not in that state, (e.g., Loewenstein, 1996; Van Boven & Loewenstein, 2003). For example, consumers are willing to undertake riskier behaviors to obtain products they are craving when under the influence of a visceral drive than when in a neutral state (Ditto, Pizarro, Epstein, Jacobsen, & MacDonald, 2006), they show less interest in products that can improve their health and safety but might interfere with pleasure when they are aroused (Ariely & Loewenstein, 2006), and they make more pessimistic (and perhaps realistic) forecasts of their ability to exert self-control when confronted with temptation than when that temptation is not present (Nordgren, van der Pligt, & van Harreveld, 2008).

Past as prologue

People not only take pleasure from nostalgia and fond memories but also use their recollections to inform decisions. The wisdom of such behavior is a function of the reliability of those recollections. As Kahneman (2011) cautions, one's experience and one's memory for that experience can diverge in systematic ways, and it is the latter that forms the basis for subsequent decisions. The reasonableness of viewing the past as prologue also depends on the similarity between the past and future experiences, and learning from past experience requires a decision about which past experiences are most relevant to one's current forecast (Wilson, Meyers, & Gilbert, 2001). In many hedonic applications, identical events are rare, inasmuch as no two movies, vacations, meals, or concerts are experientially the same. Thus, prior hedonic experiences may at best serve as crude reference points. And, even if past experiences were similar to forecasted ones, the reliability of autobiographical memory can be quite low in terms of the quantity, selectivity, and distortion of remembrances (e.g., Schacter, 2002). Despite this lack of correspondence, the past is still a common prompt of decisions regarding future pleasure.

Recalled moments

These observations raise the question of what information does serve as the basis for retrospective assessment of a hedonic event. A classic finding is that the temporal duration of the positive and negative elements of the experience is not predictive of one's retrospective evaluation of that event (e.g., Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). Fredrickson and Kahneman hypothesized that memory-based evaluation is instead based on the peak and final moments of the experience (e.g., Fredrickson, 2000; Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993), although evidence for this idea is sometimes mixed in real-life contexts such as vacations or meals (e.g., Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Rode, Rozin, & Durlach, 2007). The consumer context requires further tests of generalizability. For example, within the cinematic context of the original peak-end research, brief film clips capture some emotions but are not capable of addressing tedium or boredom that may grow with duration. In addition, some hedonic experiences have multiple but opposing peak components, some of which may comprise the end of the experience (e.g., the thrill of skiing and the aversiveness of traveling home). Hence, the question of whether and how multi-part or extended experiences are compartmentalized looms large (Ariely & Zauberman, 2000, 2003).

Abstraction and reconstruction

An important determinant of prediction and expectation is recalled experience. We noted in the context of satiation that people err by anchoring on the present when forecasting future preferences. However, people also anchor on the present when recalling prior emotions and visceral states (e.g., Nordgren, van der Pligt, & van Harreveld, 2006; Robinson & Clore, 2002). Emotions vary in intensity over time and, moreover, the most salient emotion may be the emotion one feels at present (Van Boven et al., 2009). For example, consumers may form an on-line assessment but later reconstruct it in a context that includes subsequent information, behaviors, and feelings (Braun, 1999; Cowley, 2007; Levine & Safer, 2002). As a result, recollections of previous emotional states are biased in the direction of later events or are unintentionally distorted through an inference process to be consistent with the subsequent state of affairs.

In fact, emotional assessment of the event is more extreme both before and after the event than at the time of its occurrence (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997; Wilson, Meyers, & Gilbert, 2003; Wirtz et al., 2003), yet decisions to repeat the experience appear driven to a greater degree by recollected experience than by predicted or experienced emotion (Wirtz et al., 2003). One account of this pattern can be derived from the framework developed by Robinson and Clore (2002) and adapted to the consumer context by Xu and Schwarz (2009). This model states that, whereas consumers can reliably describe the hedonic nature of current experience, once the experience has ended its nature can only be retrieved, not re-experienced. Episodic details are partially retrievable in the short term, but even these details rapidly fade and consumers must eventually rely on semantic memory—or general knowledge—to reconstruct an episode. The U-shaped time course of the extremity of experience results from the fact that "… our predictions of how we *would feel* while doing

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X, global memories of how we *usually feel* while doing X, and reconstructions of how we *really felt* during a distant instance of doing X are all based on the same inputs—our general knowledge and intuitions" (Schwarz & Xu, 2011, p.143).[3]

Schwarz and Xu's conclusion is interesting for its uneven correspondence to otherwise similar paradigms. On the one hand, research has shown that recollected experience can be distorted by higher-order beliefs. For example, consistent with traditional memory research (Alba & Hasher, 1983), Klaaren et al. (1994) note that people who possess affective expectations prior to an event may either skew retrieval of details in the direction of those expectations, distort the experienced valence of those details, and/or alter the weights of the details to be consistent with expectations. Lay theories are also known to distort recollection, so that remembered experience is consistent with one's beliefs about how that experience should have felt at the time (e.g., Ross, 1989). Further, recollections can be tainted not only by the inherent dynamics of memory but also by consumers' motivation to achieve particular objectives, such as when consumers retrieve and integrate different components of a desired experience in order to justify repeating that experience (Cowley, 2008).

On the other hand, the assertion that hedonic recollection is primarily reconstructive in nature runs counter to judgment-referral processes emphasized within the decision literature (see, e.g., Chattopadhyay & Alba, 1988; Hastie & Park, 1986; Lynch, Marmorstein, & Weigold, 1988). These divergent results are not mutually exclusive but do suggest that additional research regarding the difference between judgment and emotion is necessary. Although judgment-referral is a robust phenomenon, it appears that emotionally tinged recollections may be less durable or resistant to revision, due either to their physiological components (e.g., Loewenstein, 1996) or to a tendency to devote greater elaboration to present and future emotion-laced events than to past experiences (Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007).

Making trade-offs

Because hedonic consumption is often costly to one's health and well-being (and one's bank account), consumers must often trade off their desire for pleasure with its potential consequences. How effectively they are able to make these calculations influences how "accurate" their decisions are. In this final section, we return to the most traditional area of research into hedonic consumption: comparing hedonic consumption to its utilitarian counterpart.

Myopia and hyperopia

As noted, much hedonic decision research examines when consumers are likely to choose a hedonic option over a utilitarian one, with a focus on understanding when people will act myopically by putting their short-term (hedonic) interests ahead of their long-term (utilitarian) ones. As discussed elsewhere (e.g., Wertenbroch, 2003), large and impressive literatures speak to consumer self-control and impulsiveness, often with observations about people's myopic tendencies. The line from this research to hedonic consumption is direct in that vices/wants/luxuries by their nature provide pleasure, so much so that consumers are often drawn to them at the expense of their longer-term welfare. The general substance of this work is that, because short-term pleasure is the appeal of a hedonic product, those aspects of a choice that increase the influence of emotions or urges on decision making and decrease self-control will increase myopic behavior. Such influences include but are not limited to: the temporal proximity of the decision (Milkman, Rogers, & Bazerman, 2009, 2010; Rogers & Bazerman, 2007), whether the decision maker is in a visceral state (Loewenstein, 1996; Read & Van Leeuwen, 1998), whether choices are made in isolation or simultaneously (Bazerman et al., 1998; Read & Loewenstein, 1995; Read, Loewenstein, & Kalyanamaran, 1999), whether consumers are prevention or promotion focused (Chernev, 2004; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Dholakia, Gopinath, Bagozzi, & Nataraajan, 2006), and whether consumers are under cognitive load or otherwise distracted (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

A good deal of the work pitting hedonic and utilitarian options against each other in the context of consumer self-control has taken a more surprising approach by assuming that consumers may occasionally swing too far in the other direction, prizing utilitarian consumption over hedonic consumption that would exert a greater impact on their general long-term welfare. Kivetz and Simonson (2002a, 2002b; see also Keinan & Kivetz, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006; Kivetz & Zheng, 2006) examined welfare-enhancing options and consumers' willingness to depart from their natural frugality and prudence, in effect questioning the assumed virtue of self-control. The assumption is that consumers may be reluctant to purchase luxuries because luxuries are less easily justified, especially in the presence of a less "wasteful" or "sinful" alternative. Although it is difficult to identify the true rational or optimal decision in such subjective contexts, such reluctance may lead consumers to engage in self-defeating behavior by prizing consumption behaviors that may not truly be in their long-term interest. Some particularly prudent consumers are especially prone to this type of behavior, notably when feeling guilt from a previous indulgence (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007).

Of course, as the aforementioned findings regarding myopic decision-making will attest, most consumers surely are not ascetics, and therefore it becomes necessary to reconcile the two inclinations by understanding the conditions under which they might gravitate toward a utilitarian choice but still allow themselves some hedonic advantage. Kivetz and Simonson

[3] It has been argued that people are slow to learn from these mistakes for at least two memory-related reasons. First, because people's memory for a positive outcome exceeds the actual experience (e.g., Wilson et al., 2003), they are unlikely to be circumspect about future extreme expectations. Second, an affective form of hindsight bias may emerge, wherein people misrecall not only the experience but their predictions of their experience and, because recall of those prior predictions may be based on one's current state, these recalled predictions will appear more accurate than they truly are (Meyvis, Ratner, & Levav, 2010; see also Xu & Schwarz, 2009). As with hindsight bias, people cannot be chastened by their own poor performance if they revise history to indicate that their performance was good.

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(2002a) report an increased willingness to choose the hedonic option over a dominating utilitarian one when the former can be framed as a reward, is received later in time, has uncertainty around its occurrence (see also O'Curry & Strahilevitz, 2001), is viewed in terms of its welfare-enhancing abilities, and is considered in the absence of a utilitarian reference point (see also Okada, 2005). Consumers who feel lower levels of guilt (as a trait) are less likely to resist hedonic consumption (Kivetz & Zheng, 2006). Further, when allowed the benefit of hindsight, consumers regret not having pursued pleasure in the past (Kivetz & Keinan, 2006) and can be prodded to pursue pleasure in the present by cuing, in various ways, the likelihood of future regret caused by foregoing it (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Keinan & Kivetz, 2008).

Hedonic options also may be chosen if they can be justified in some manner. A hedonic purchase becomes relatively more attractive when it is paired with a charitable incentive (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998) or a utilitarian gift for oneself or a hedonic gift for another individual (Lee-Wingate & Corfman, 2010), when consumers are able to pay for the purchase in effort rather than money or the hedonic option is earned via effort, good performance, or a previous act of altruism (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Kivetz & Zheng, 2006; Okada, 2005), when the time frame for consumption is short or limited and thus prevents contemplation of the costs of consumption (Shu & Gneezy, 2010), when receiving the hedonic product is framed as a windfall (O'Curry & Strahilevitz, 2001), especially if the gain is obtained under positive, feel-good circumstances (Levav & McGraw, 2009), and when it is paired at a discounted price with a utilitarian product (Khan & Dhar, 2010).

Pricing pleasure

Consumers make trade-offs not only between different types of consumption, but also between hedonic consumption and the resources necessary to procure it—namely, its price. Price promotions vary in terms of the benefits they convey, with monetary promotions providing more utilitarian benefits and nonmonetary promotions providing more hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000). Moreover, consumers are more willing to trade-off price for other product features within the domain of hedonic goods than in the domain of functional goods for at least two reasons: (1) consumers use purchase quantity to self-impose consumption constraints, such that they are willing to forgo quantity discounts and purchase vice-type products in smaller amounts in order to enforce reduced consumption (Wertenbroch, 1998). Consumers also prefer a price discount to a bonus pack for a vice good because they cannot justify getting more of a vice good than they would already obtain; hence, they prefer alleviating guilt over their purchase by spending less money on the default quantity (Mishra & Mishra, 2011). (2) Consumers purchasing for pleasure care less about the price of that pleasure and consequently are more price inelastic for hedonic goods, whereas consumers making utilitarian purchases wish to get the most useful product for its price (Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Typically, hedonic price-insensitivity means that monetary promotions tend to be relatively more effective at driving sales of utilitarian products, whereas nonmonetary promotions are relatively more effective at driving sales of hedonic products (Chandon et al., 2000; Park & Mowen, 2007). Similarly, consumers who are especially quality- or price-conscious are more prone to reduce their expenditures by purchasing store brands, whereas those who tend to value shopping enjoyment or make impulse decisions are more likely to save money through promotions (Ailawadi et al., 2001).

Conclusion

Where do we stand after 30 years of research on hedonic consumption? Awareness of the differences between hedonic and utilitarian products has provided a measure of predictability to researchers and practitioners wishing to address questions as diverse as how best to word advertising messages (e.g., Kronrod, Grinstein, & Wathieu, 2012), how the method and amount of payment affects the type of product one purchases and consumes (e.g., Bagchi & Block, 2011; Thomas, Desai, & Seenivasan, 2011), which situations prompt consumers to exert self-determination (e.g., Botti & McGill, 2011), and which preferences might be heritable versus learned (Simonson & Sela, 2011). Researchers have also begun to build an understanding of how consumers recall and enjoy past hedonic consumption, and how they make predictions about their future enjoyment of products and experiences, with the hope that they can be encouraged to make choices that will make them happier in the future.

However, just as psychology at large has been accused of focusing too much on process at the expense of an examination of the important domains of human experience (e.g., Rozin, 2006), so too have consumer behavior researchers carefully studied what hedonic consumption is (and is not) and what determines enjoyment while often overlooking what it is that truly brings consumers pleasure and how they seek hedonic experiences in their day-to-day lives. By focusing on fine-grained distinctions between types of products and specific features of the consumption environment, researchers have at times overlooked pleasure itself, the ultimate goal of hedonic consumption, and how it exists "in the wild." This is not to say that researchers should abandon examination of the processes by which consumers perceive and experience hedonic pursuits; these topics remain vitally important. Nor is it to say that small-scale independent and dependent variables are always undesirable. Although researchers should strive to demonstrate the commonality between a candy bar in the lab and a 5-course tasting at a luxurious restaurant, consumers do partake of many small pleasures with modest expectations. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that the next 30 years of hedonic consumption research could be more fruitfully spent exploring some of life's more meaningful or memorable pleasures.

A sharper focus on pleasure, as consumers seek and experience it, unlocks many potentially interesting lines of research. For instance, it is readily apparent that people seek out and even enjoy objectively unpleasant experiences. They eat bitter chocolate and hot chilies (sometimes both at once); they get painful tattoos; they run marathons; they watch terrifying movies. Previous research has begun to examine whether people can simultaneously experience pleasure along with any number of negative emotions, including

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fear and pain (e.g., Andrade & Cohen, 2007). Inquiry has also begun on the not-purely-pleasant experiences that people undergo in order to prove to others or themselves that they could do them (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011). What is it about such experiences that people enjoy: the sense of accomplishment? the contrast to other experiences? the pain or fear itself? Are they enjoyed more in retrospect or in the moment, alone or socially? In a similar vein, consumers often strive to create things themselves that they could simply purchase: picking apples at an orchard, building their own furniture, making baby quilts, knitting sweaters. Self-manufactured products do strike their makers as being more valuable than an identical object made by another person (Norton, Mochon, & Ariely, 2012). From where does this value arise? How do consumers determine the value of their time? Do the hobbies that result in something functional (e.g., knitting, cooking) differ from those in which the hobby is an end to itself (e.g., building model trains, folding origami)? Finally, what drives amateurs who labor to master a skill like woodworking or candy-making or to understand and appreciate a particular domain like wine or Japanese anime but have no professional goal in mind? We discussed the effect that expertise has on enjoyment of a mastered domain, but consumers often seem to enjoy being an expert in and of itself. And they often choose domains to master that are off-putting or inaccessible to novices: wines and beers, science fiction, sports statistics, acid jazz. Which domains lend themselves to this kind of expertise, and do they differ in fundamental ways from more accessible and widely shared areas of fandom? And, has the nature and meaning of these kinds of expertise changed in the last decade, when anyone with an internet connection can become a "geek," as some have argued (Kreider, 2011; Oswalt, 2010)?

These questions illustrate how the last 30 years of research have produced many insights but a still wide-open landscape. We hope that a renewed focus on pleasure as it exists inside and outside the laboratory and on its own merits proves fruitful for researchers and for consumers. Future research can reveal more about when, where, and why consumers find pleasure in the things that they do—questions that cut to the core of what it means to be happy, and human.

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