LET IT GO? HOW AGENCY AND POWER IMPACT THE CONSUMPTION OF UNCERTAIN PRODUCTS AND GROUP EXPERIENCES

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

While most research has focused on the role of personal control and agency in utilitarian decisions (e.g., choice of meals, clothing, grocery items), my dissertation investigates how feelings of control influence the consumption of uncertain products and positive experiences. Using a multi-method approach, I conduct and analyze experimental, field, and company data to investigate the conditions under which consumers' (desire for) control impacts their purchase decisions and experiences.

In the first essay, I look at how consumers' desire to maintain control may decrease their preference for uncertain products. I conceptualize "surprise offerings" (products which are revealed to the consumer only if purchased,) and distinguish them from token surprises, studied in past literature. I build and test a theoretical framework that identifies the individual and contextual factors that influence consumers' preference for surprise offerings. I find that men prefer surprise offerings to a lesser extent than women do, due to men's unwillingness to relinquish control over the purchase. Several field and lab studies examine boundary effects and suggest ways to increase the appeal of surprise boxes for men. Besides its theoretical contributions, this paper has important implications for e-commerce and more specifically, for the growing business of surprise boxes - online companies that deliver surprise products for a fixed (monthly) fee.

In my second essay, I look at consumers' experiences of social events with asymmetric distribution of effort and control. In contrast to past work, which has assumed roughly equal

contribution of each party in a group consumption event, I find that the asymmetric contributions to a joint experience impact the anticipated and experienced outcomes of the experience, thus presenting an interesting case of affective misforecasting. My research examines practical interventions that can increase consumer's desire to take leadership over an event and to extract greater experienced utility. This work provides insight not only into when and how people choose to participate in group experiences, but also, broadly, into when people choose to share resources with others, thus proposing ways to ensure the sustainability of collaborative systems such as AirBnB, EatWith, MealSharing, and Meetup.

Overall, my dissertation contributes to the literature on personal control, hedonic consumption and experiences, positive uncertainty, and social influence. Further, my work has implications for digital marketing, collaborative consumption, and new product development.

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I am excited to begin the new chapter of my journey in academia as an assistant professor and hope to continue the collaborations and friendships that I have built in Pittsburgh.

1.0 UNPACKING THE SURPRISE BOX: HOW LOSS OF CONTROL DECREASES MEN'S PREFERENCE FOR POSITIVE UNCERTAINTY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

While shopping on eBay, looking at LivingSocial deals, or browsing Facebook consumers may encounter offers for a mystery watch, a surprise box of healthy treats, or an unknown "deal of fortune" vacation package. The ubiquity of these for-sale surprises in recent years suggests that consumers may value the experience of surprise enough to purchase it as a core offering. In fact, the business of surprise offerings has grown quickly. The surprise box business alone is a multibillion dollar industry (Lopez 2015) with an estimated growth rate of 200% (Segran 2015). One of the most popular surprise box catalogs, mysubscriptionaddiction.com, currently lists 1,283 different surprise subscriptions from cosmetics (e.g., Birchbox, GlossyBox, Julep) to dog treats (e.g., BarkBox, True Drool, PupJoy). Birchbox, which offers surprise cosmetics samples for $10/month and is one of the most successful companies in this market, has increased its customer base by 50% in the last two years, making over $125 million in annual revenue (Casserly 2012; Griffith 2014). Interestingly, the business of selling surprise has attracted not only start-ups but also established companies such as KLM (which offers "Monday's Mystery Ticket" – a discounted round-trip airplane ticket to a destination revealed to the traveler one day

after the purchase; Rosenbloom 2015) or Hertz (which offers "Manager's Special" – a surprise rental car, determined by the manager at the time of pick up).

All of the above-mentioned examples include for-sale products or services that are unknown to the consumer at the time of purchase and revealed only once received. In other words, the surprise component represents the core element of the product proposition. We label these *surprise offerings*. We argue that past work is less informative regarding consumers' preference for surprise offerings since it has studied mostly a conceptually different type of surprise - unexpected windfall gifts and uncertain promotions, which we collectively refer to as *token surprises.* We propose that surprise offerings involve two key distinguishing characteristics: 1) high uncertainty about the entire purchase until product receipt; and 2) an active purchase decision to opt into uncertainty and relinquish control over its outcome.

Because of these distinct aspects, we propose and find that men are less attracted and react less positively to surprise offerings compared to women. We argue that this occurs because the loss of control associated with uncertainty is particularly undesirable for men given their more agentic nature compared to women. We provide robust evidence of this gender effect and its underlying mechanism in one field and six lab studies across multiple product categories (baked goods, movies, healthy snacks, weekend experiences, and juice drinks), participant populations (undergraduate students, Amazon's Mechanical Turk respondents, and passers-by), and stages of the purchase process (choice, product evaluation, and future purchase intentions).

While our findings have clear practical importance for companies selling or participating in surprise offerings, they also offer important theoretical advances. To our knowledge, this paper is the first to conceptualize surprise offerings. We contribute to the literature on positive uncertainty by studying consumers' responses to focal as opposed to peripheral sources of

uncertainty and highlight the key factors that may influence this response. Next, we identify an individual difference factor that impacts the choice and evaluation of surprise offerings – gender. This finding is important because past literature is equivocal as to whether men will like surprise offerings more than women or vice versa. On one hand, given the heightened risk of surprise offerings, men may be more attracted than women to such products (Croson and Gneezy 2009). On the other hand, the literature on agency and perceived control would predict that men would prefer certainty, because it gives them more control over their decision (Bakan 1966; Cross and Madson 1997). Our research teases these two competing hypotheses apart and provides convergent evidence in support of the latter account. Relatedly, while most of the literature in economics and psychology has found that women prefer to avoid uncertainty (Croson and Gneezy 2009), our findings suggest that this risk aversion may be domain-specific. In the context of surprise offerings, we show that men are in fact less risk-tolerant compared to women.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, we develop our theoretical framework, articulating the key differences between surprise offerings and the types of token surprises studied in past literature. This framework informs our hypotheses. Next, we discuss eight studies which test our predictions. We conclude with a discussion of the results, their theoretical and practical implications, and avenues for future research.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.2.1 Conceptualization of Surprise Offerings

By definition, surprises involve some degree of uncertainty. So why would anyone pay for an uncertain product rather than a certain alternative? Past literature argues that uncertainty is unappealing to consumers (Gneezy, List, and Wu 2006; Lanzetta and Driscoll 1966; Loewenstein 1994; Urbany et al. 1989; Wang, Feng, and Keller 2013). Moreover, consumers believe that they would enjoy a positive event to a greater extent if they know its outcome in advance (Wilson et al. 2005). In fact, one of the central tenets of Prospect Theory is that people are risk-averse in the domain of gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and, provided that they are to receive something desirable, consumers would prefer to spend money on a certain item rather than a surprise.

Recent literature, however, suggests that consumers can enjoy uncertainty, especially in the domain of gains. Uncertainty can be appealing when it allows for wishful thinking and savoring (Lee and Qiu 2009; Loewenstein 1987; Norton, Frost and Ariely 2007; Whitchurch, Wilson, and Gilbert 2010) and promises excitement (Vosgerau et al. 2006). Further, uncertainty associated with a positive event intensifies positive emotional reactions (Mellers and McGraw 2000; Wilson et al. 2005), particularly for affective purchase decisions (Laran and Tsiros 2013), while also enhancing cognitive engagement and information processing (Golman, Loewenstein, and Gurney 2015; Tormala, Jia, and Norton 2012).

Most of this work has examined two types of token surprises: surprise promotions - uncertain promotional gifts received with purchase (Goldsmith and Amir 2010; Laran and Tsiros 2013) and windfall surprises - free, unexpected presents (Lee and Qiu 2009; Valenzuela, Mellers,

and Strebel 2010). For example, Goldsmith and Amir (2010) show that consumers like surprise promotions ("Win a Hershey's kiss or a Godiva truffle") as much as valuable certain promotions ("Win a Godiva truffle") because they focus on the optimistic outcome of the surprise promotion (win the valuable option).

While this work is helpful in understanding how positive surprises may enhance consumers' mood and influence the purchase of the (separate) certain core product, it is not informative in cases when the core product itself is uncertain, that is, when consumers consider a *surprise offering*. We propose that the decision making process of purchasing a surprise offering (figure 1, panel A) is fundamentally different from the decision making process of purchasing a product which is augmented with a token surprise (figure 1, panel B).

First, surprise offerings involve a greater extent of uncertainty than token surprises do. At the time of consideration, by design, the consumer has little information about the contents of the surprise offering. For example, most surprise boxes specify the product category of the surprise (e.g., healthy snacks) but do not list the complete set of products from which the surprise offering will be selected. Thus, the product or service to be received as a surprise may turn out to be more or less desirable than a certain alternative. This is quite different from the case of token surprises, where the range of possible gifts, as well as the probability of winning each gift, is either known (e.g., if you purchase today's special, you will get a can of coke or a bag of potato chips as a free gift; Laran and Tsiros 2013, Study 1) or irrelevant (e.g., you receive an unexpected coffee drink; Valenzuela et al. 2010, Study 2). Consequently, surprise offerings involve a greater sense of risk than token surprises.

Second, note that token surprises require little or no decision making on the side of the consumer. By contrast, when considering a surprise offering, the consumer needs to actively opt

for uncertainty. That is, given her desire to purchase from the category, the consumer is faced with the choice of selecting an uncertain surprise offering versus a certain alternative. Moreover, in order to obtain the surprise, the consumer incurs financial costs associated with the price of the surprise offering as well as decision costs associated with the time and effort invested in making the decision.

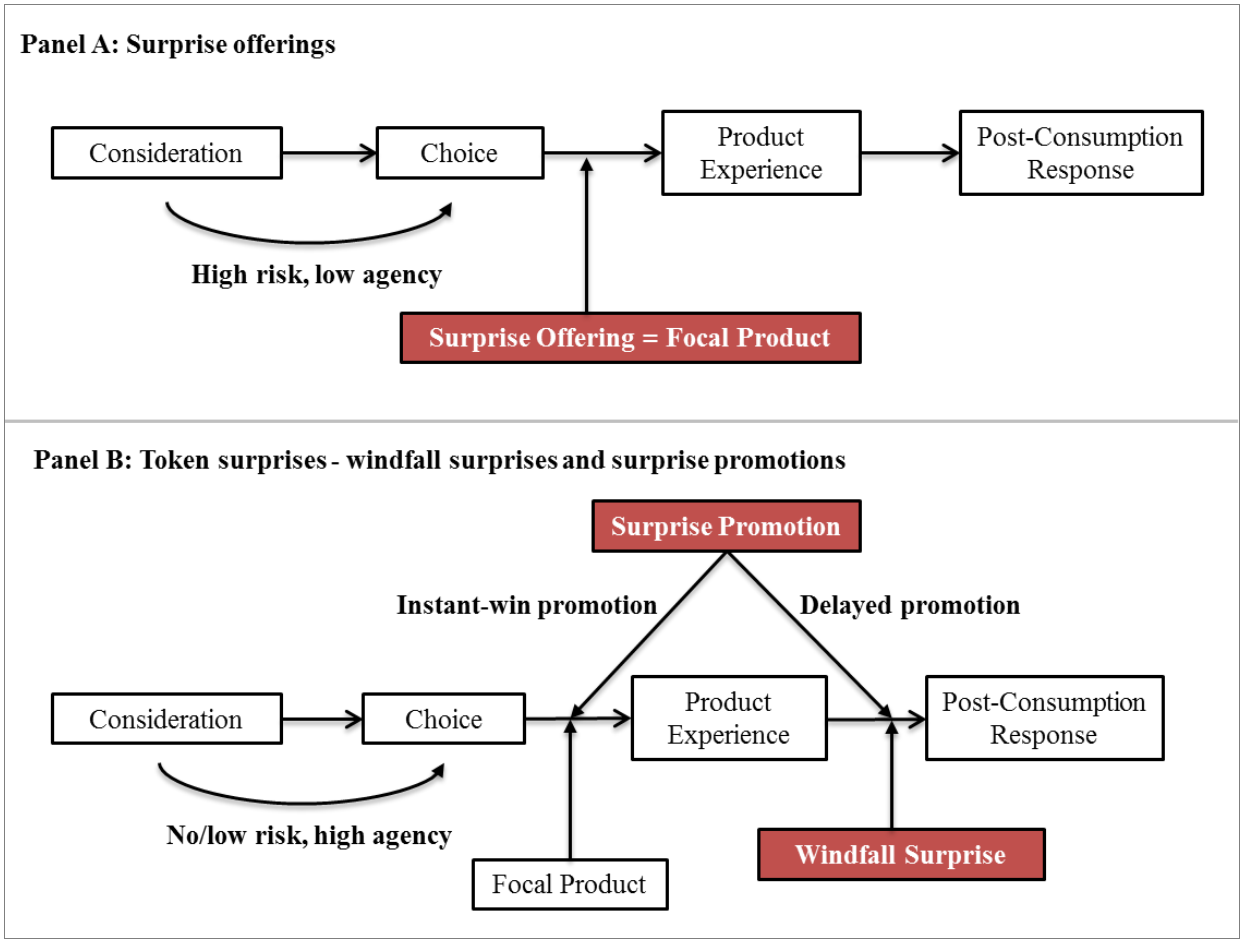
Consequently, we suggest that when consumers consider surprise offerings, they are likely to consider the degree of control they have over their choice outcomes. In general, consumers desire choice and experience greater outcome satisfaction when they have made their own decisions, especially for hedonic or highly preferred choice sets (Botti and Iyengar 2004; Botti and McGill 2011; Botti and McGill 2006). In turn, the act of commission raises choosers' sense of responsibility for the outcome (Langer 1975; Botti and McGill 2006). Yet, the high uncertainty of surprise offerings diminishes the chooser's agency – while consumers are asked to volitionally opt into uncertainty, the effect of their volition is limited. Such inability to control the outcome of this choice may violate expected purchase norms.

Thus, in comparison to token surprises, the focal choice in surprise offerings is high in risk and low in agency; the decision whether to select a surprise offering (vs. a certain offering) is determined not only by the expected utility of each considered alternative, but also by the consumer's willingness to relinquish control over the purchase.

1.2.2 Gender as a Moderator in Consumers' Preferences for Surprise Offerings

Given these critical aspects of surprise offerings, we propose that, unlike token surprises (where no gender effects have been reported), gender will play a key role in shaping responses to surprise offerings. Interestingly, the literature suggests two competing predictions.

Figure 1: Decision Making Process for Surprise Offerings vs. Token Surprises



First, consider the heightened risk entailed in surprise offerings. The research on risk behavior has consistently demonstrated that men are more risk seeking than women (Croson and Gneezy 2009; Eckel and Grossman 2008; Powell and Ansic 1997; He, Inman, and Mittal 2008). In a meta-analytic review of the economic literature, Croson and Gneezy (2009) found that women are robustly less risk-seeking in hypothetical, lab, and high-stake real decisions. Drawing on this body of research, it could be expected that men would be more likely to choose surprise offerings (vs. certain alternatives) compared to women.

Second, though, consider the volitional relinquishment of control required by the purchase of a surprise offering. Past research suggests that there may be gender differences in the

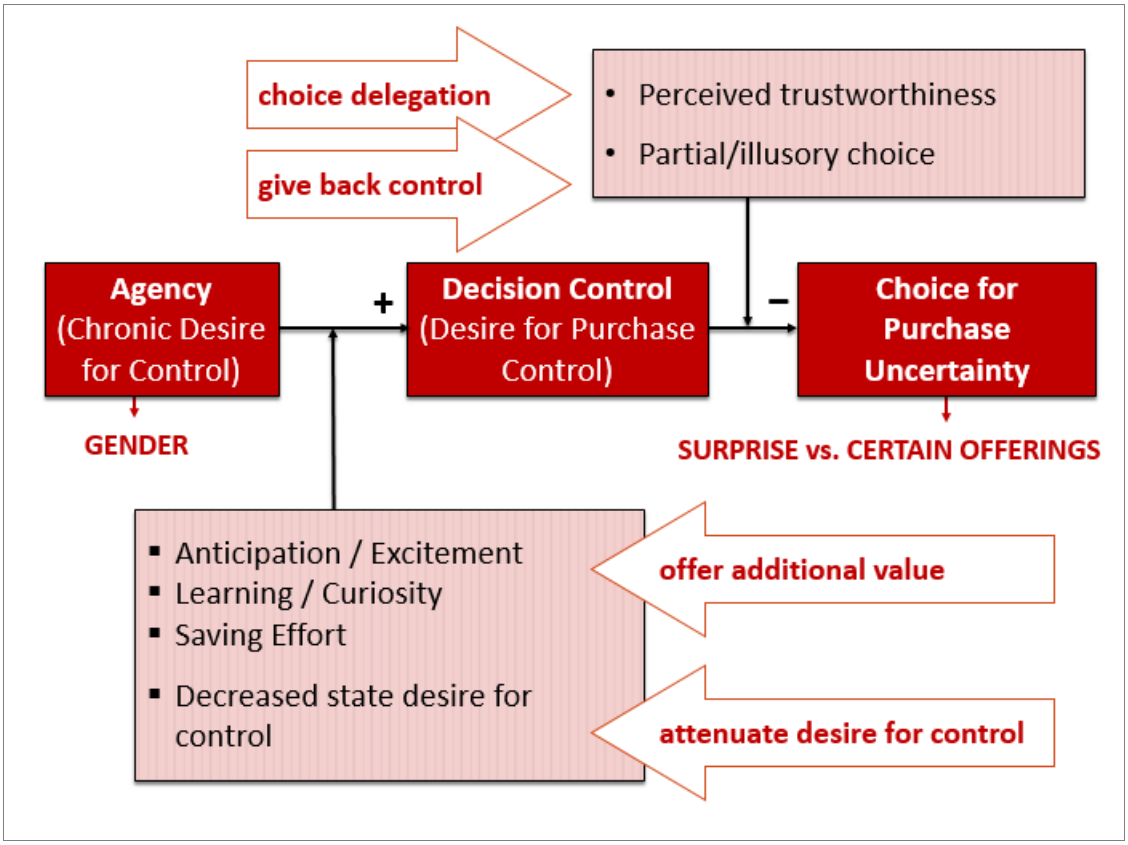
desire for control due to the different sex roles that men and women adopt in society (Cross and Madson 1997; Markus and Kitayama 1991). According to normative beliefs prevalent in Western societies, men are expected to seek more autonomy, maintain control, and assert their preferences more strongly than women (Day, Stump, and Carreon 2003; Wood et al 1997). Relatedly, agency, also more typical of men than women, has been shown to be positively associated with one's desire for control over one's experiences (Helgeson 1994). Hence, this area of research would predict that the perceived loss of control in surprise offerings will be especially unappealing to men, making them less likely to choose the surprise offering than women.

In summary, the research on risk behavior suggests that men should be more attracted to the riskiness of surprise offerings while the literature on personal control makes the opposite prediction. We reconcile these conflicting hypotheses by suggesting that positive surprises fall in the domain of gains, given that people generally expect companies to provide a desirable product (Laran and Tsiros 2013; Oliver, Rust, Varki 1997). Therefore, we propose that in the context of surprise offerings, the riskiness of the surprise will be less prominent than the loss of control. In turn, we expect that men will be less likely to choose a surprise offering compared to women. Men's aversion to giving up control in this purchase context will lead them to select a certain option which allows them to feel in control of their choice.

In sum, we posit that consumers' chronic desire to be in control would lead to a higher desire to have purchase control, which in turn would lead to a lower likelihood to opt for purchase uncertainty. Given the above-mentioned literature demonstrating the link between chronic desire for control and gender, we use gender as a proxy for agency (except for study 1C in which we demonstrate that trait agency predicts preference for surprise offerings). Next, we

propose several moderators. Specifically, we suggest that when the product provides some additional value (e.g., excitement associated with the anticipation of discovery or learning about one's preferences through sampling of new products), the situational desire for control will be attenuated. Additionally, if the retailer is perceived as untrustworthy, consumers will be less likely to delegate their choice to the company and would instead opt for certainty. Finally, providing consumers with partial or illusionary control would lessen the perceived loss of control and increase the likelihood to purchase surprise offerings. Figure 2 presents the conceptual model of the paper.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model



Formally, we propose that:

H_1: Men will be less likely to choose a surprise offering (vs. a certain offering) compared to women.

H_2: Men will be less likely to choose the surprise offering due to their unwillingness to relinquish control over their purchase decision.

H_3: Gender and level of control over a surprise offering will interact to predict consumers' evaluation of a surprise offering, such that:

- **a.** Giving consumers partial control over the contents of the surprise offering will enhance men's evaluation of that offering relative to a surprise offering that contains no elements of control, but,
- **b.** Partial control will have no effect on women's evaluation of a surprise offering.

H_4: When consumers are encouraged to relinquish control, men's preference for the surprise offering will increase such that men and women will be equally likely to choose the surprise over the certain offering.

We test these hypotheses in the next studies. First, we present some preliminary data from a company that organizes surprise trips. The data suggests that women are more likely to purchase a solo surprise trip compared to men, even though men seem likely to select a higher-value trip. In study 1A, we observe people's behavior at an actual charity bake sale and find that men are less likely to purchase a surprise baked good compared to women, thus supporting hypothesis 1. We replicate this effect in a controlled experiment in study 1B using movie DVDs as the product category. In study 1C, we demonstrate that chronic agency is a significant predictor of choice of the surprise offering. In study 2, we find that men's decreased preference for surprise offerings is driven by their desire to have control over their purchase decision. We also rule out several alternative explanations (mental imagery, curiosity, optimism, and divergent perceptions of the offerings). In studies 3A and 3B, we investigate how providing partial or

illusory control increases men's attitudes towards purchase uncertainty. Finally, in study 4 we demonstrate that temporary attenuating consumers' desire for control increases men's preference for surprise offerings.

1.3 PILOT STUDY – PACK UP + GO

We collaborated with a Pittsburgh-based start-up company Pack Up + Go (www.packupgo.com) to obtain initial insights about consumers' preferences for surprise. The company organizes 3-day surprise trips which remain unknown until the day the customer is scheduled to travel. Specifically, customers order a trip online by indicating their desired budget per person (ranging from $400 to $5,000), group size, travel date, and preferences (e.g., travel by car vs. train/plane/bus, occasion, travel interests and recently visited cities) in a short online survey. Next, the company decides on a destination and books the accommodation, transportation, and extracurricular activities. Finally, the customer(s) receives an envelope with tickets, city tour guide, and agenda a few days before the trip. Once the trip is complete, the company sends customers post-trip satisfaction survey.

We obtained data about the trip purchases, online survey responses, and satisfaction survey responses from January 2016 to March 2017. As the focus of this paper is on decisions for the self, we analyzed only the solo trips (N = 96). If a participant did not self-report gender, we used social media to determine their gender. The majority of solo travelers were women – 76% of all orders for the specified period. Further, a Negative Binomial regression model with gender (1 = male, 0 = female) as the predictor and price of the trip as the outcome indicated that on average men spent slightly more per trip (M = $900) compared to women ($M$ = $821), but the

difference did not reach significance (β = -.08, SE = .086, Wald's χ^2 = .76, p = .38) Further, we analyzed the self-reported trip satisfaction and repatronage intentions for those solo customers who completed the post-trip survey (N = 44, 80% women). The Multivariate Analysis of Variance indicated that men and women did not differ in terms of overall satisfaction with the trip (M_{women} = 4.64, M_{men} = 4.89, F(1, 42) =1.47, p = 0.23) or in terms of the likelihood to recommend the company to others (M_{women} =9.64, M_{men} = 9.67, F < 1). Yet, we note that the cell size is very small and these results are only preliminary.

The results suggest several interesting findings. First, women seem more interested and likely to book a solo surprise trip compared to men. Unfortunately, we do not observe the consumers who were aware of the service but chose not to purchase a trip. Thus, it could be that the higher number of female customers is driven by a higher proportion of women in the target population who are familiar with Pack Up + Go. A follow-up survey or web analytics data could potentially provide further insight into this matter. Additionally, the data suggests that while men are less likely to purchase a trip, they seem to be willing to spend more, and end up enjoying the experience as much as women do. Thus, men may be an important customer segment which warrants further investigation. Using a field experiment, the next study seeks to provide additional evidence of how men and women respond differently to surprise offerings.

1.4 STUDY 1A: BAKE ME A SURPRISE!

1.4.1 Method

We collaborated with the local chapter of the National Association of Women MBAs (NAWMBA) at their annual charity bake sale at the Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh. Faculty, staff, and students from the business school donated baked goods which were sold for $1 each. The bake sale took place twice per day (around noon and early evening) for four days (Monday through Thursday). Among the baked goods, we placed several non-transparent bags with a red bow and a label “Surprise treat”. The MBA students selling the goods were instructed to mention that the surprise is a baked good (to keep the surprise in the domain of gains) but did not know any other details about the surprise treats or the study.

The surprise bags contained one of several different baked treats from an assortment that was changed every day to ensure that people did not have expectations about the contents of the surprise as the bake sale progressed. Further, the certain baked goods offered at the sale changed every day; at any given moment, there were between 10-15 different types of clearly-identified baked goods to choose from. For everyone who purchased a baked good, we unobtrusively recorded their gender, and the number of surprises and certain baked goods purchased. Note that the main unit of analysis is purchase observation rather than unique individual as the same person could purchase different treats on different days. Purchases from the marketing faculty and PhD students were not recorded. We were interested to see whether more women (vs. men) would purchase a surprise bag.

1.4.2 Analysis and Results

We restricted the analysis to the 131 observations (45% women) that included only one purchased item (68% of all recorded observations). We reasoned that people who purchased only one item were more likely making a choice for themselves whereas people who purchased two or more items were more likely to be purchasing some snacks to give to others.

We conducted a chi-square test to compare the incidence with which women (vs. men) chose a surprise (vs. certain) baked good. The results indicated that women picked the surprise offering in 17% of the single-item purchases they made compared to only 6% for men (χ^2 (1,131) = 4.41, p =.036).

1.4.3 Discussion

In this field study, we unobtrusively observed consumers' real purchase decisions and found that women were more likely to pay for a surprise offering compared to men in support of hypothesis 1. While one may be concerned about the lower incidence of choosing the surprise across genders, it should be noted that 1) we did not have control over the certain options at the sale and at times the alternatives were highly appealing; 2) consumers were not making a decision between the surprise vs. everything else but rather between 10-15 attractive options. Hence, it is very likely that for many people one of the certain items was a dominating option that determined their choice without even considering the surprise. In the next studies, we test our hypotheses in a more controlled lab environment.

1.5 STUDY 1B: MAY THE SURPRISE BE WITH YOU!

This study examined the choice of surprise vs. certain offerings in a hypothetical scenario. We restricted the certain offerings to one option to make choice easier and used a different product category – movies. This category was selected for several reasons. First, past research has shown that people are more attracted to uncertainty when the token surprise is associated with an experiential or affect-driven purchase (Laran and Tsiros 2013). Therefore, it is important to establish whether the effect of gender on surprise offerings holds in experiential categories. Second, for the certain offering, we selected an upcoming movie from the Star Wars saga which, at the time of the study, had released six movies and was thus quite familiar to the participants. Further, we measured participants' liking of Star Wars to ensure that the effect of gender is not driven by differences in liking of the certain offering.

1.5.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 109 Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers (M_{age} = 31.55, range 19-62, 40.4% female) who indicated that they had seen at least one of the Star Wars movies and passed an attention check completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment. We note that in this and subsequent studies we exclude all participants who indicated that they were not familiar with the brand in the certain offering. Familiarity ensures that the certain option provided more information and less risk than the surprise offering which is an important conjecture in our framework. Further, we note that all continuous predictors in this and subsequent studies are mean-centered to facilitate interpretation.

Procedure. Participants imagined that the store where they shop regularly was selling exclusive DVDs of upcoming box-office hit movies. They were asked to pick which DVD they would purchase from a set of two options – a certain offering (DVD of an upcoming Star Wars movie) or a surprise offering (the exact title is unknown). The display order of the two options was randomized and is controlled for in the analysis because there were significant order effects.

Next, participants indicated how much they liked the Star Wars movies in general (1 = dislike extremely to 7 = like extremely) and answered some additional questions about their movie preferences (e.g., whether they have watched a number of hit movies). These measures are not relevant to the current study, we will not discuss them further. Demographic information in this and subsequent studies was measured at the end.

1.5.2 Analysis and Results

Liking of the certain offering. First, we note that men (M = 5.26) and women (M = 5.41) did not differ in the extent to which they liked the Star Wars movies ($F < 1$).

Choice. We estimated a binary logistic regression on choice (1 if the surprise option was chosen, 0 otherwise) predicted by gender (1 if female, 0 if male), controlling for mean-centered liking of Star Wars movies in general and display order of the two choice options (1 if the certain offering was displayed on top, 0 if the surprise offering was displayed on top). As one would expect, the effect of liking of the certain offering was significant (β = -1.24, exp(β) = .29, Wald's χ^2 = 34.94, $p < .001$) such that the more participants liked the Star Wars saga, the more likely they were to select the certain offering. Also somewhat unsurprisingly, the effect of display order was marginal (β = -1.00, exp(β) = .37, Wald's χ^2 = 3.23, p =.07) such that participants selected the surprise offering less often (27%) when it was displayed second than when it was displayed

first (40%). Above and beyond these effects, however, the effect of gender was significant (β =1.10, exp(β) = 3.02, Wald's χ^2 = 4.02, p = .045): 43% of women vs. 28% of men chose the surprise DVD. We note that the gender x liking and gender x display order interactions were not significant in this or subsequent studies.

1.5.3 Discussion

Study 1B replicated our finding that men are less likely to select a surprise offering compared to women. We showed that this effect is observed for more experiential product categories such as movies and cannot be explained by participants' baseline preference for the certain offering. The next study seeks to demonstrate that chronic desire for control (i.e. agency) can be used instead of gender to predict choice of the surprise offering. Further, we use a different focal product category - heathy snacks –to examine whether the results generalize to less hedonic decisions.

1.6 STUDY 1C: AGENCY AS A CONTINUOUS FACTOR

1.6.1 Method

Participants and Design. The study consisted of two parts – first, participants completed a survey similar to that in study 1B; next, participants completed a follow-up survey, measuring chronic desire for control. Of the three-hundred and seventeen Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers who completed part 1 in exchange for a small monetary payment, a total of 242 participants indicated being familiar with the certain offering. The final sample consists of 190

participants (M_{age} = 34.59, range 18-68, 47.4% female) who completed part two and passed an attention check.

Procedure. Participants imagined that they were considering buying a bag of healthy snacks for $5.05 and made a choice between two options - a certain offering ("Snack bag containing healthy Kashi bars") and a surprise offering ("Snack bag containing healthy snacks that are a surprise"). The display order of the two options was randomized and is controlled for in the analysis. After respondents indicated their choice, they reported the extent to which they like Kashi bars (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely), whether they are familiar with the brand of the certain offering (yes/no), and demographic information. A follow-up survey was sent on the next day to the participants who indicated being familiar with Kashi. The survey included the agentic-communal scale (Kurt, Inman, and Argo 2011) as well as several other exploratory scales which are not discussed here. Following Kurt et al. (2011), we calculated an agency index by subtracting participants' communal scores from their agency scores.

1.6.2 Analysis and Results

Liking of the certain offering. There was no difference in liking of Kashi bars in general between men (M = 4.45) and women (M = 4.52, $F < 1$).

Choice. A logistic regression with gender (1 if female, 0 if male) as the main predictor and mean-centered liking of the certain offering and display order (1 if the certain offering was displayed first, 0 if the surprise offering was displayed first) as covariates showed the anticipated main effect of gender ($\beta = 1.72$, $\exp(\beta) = 5.57$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 16.42$, $p < .001$): 84% of women vs. 62% of men chose the surprise offering. Further, the effect of liking Kashi ($\beta = -.85$, $\exp(\beta) = .43$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 22.41$, $p < .001$) and display order ($\beta = -.82$, $\exp(\beta) = .44$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 4.56$, $p =$

.03) were also significant predictors of choice. (We note that gender did not interact with any of the covariates.)

Agency. Men had higher agency scores (M = -.10) compared to women (M = -1.38, F(1, 188) = 45.07, p<.001). Further, agency was a significant predictor of snack choice (β = -.25, exp(β) = .78, Wald's χ^2 = 4.01, p = .045), demonstrating that higher agency scores were associated with lower likelihood to select the surprise offering, controlling for liking of the certain offering (β = -.74, exp(β) = .48, Wald's χ^2 = 20.78, p < .001) and display order (β = -.58, exp(β) = .56, Wald's χ^2 = 2.55, p = .11).

1.6.3 Discussion

Besides replicating the finding that men are less likely to select a surprise offering compared to women, Study 1C demonstrated that 1) men are more agentic compared to women, and 2) agency is a significant predictor of the choice between a certain and surprise offering. The next study begins to investigate the underlying mechanism driving this effect.

1.7 STUDY 2: HEALTHY SURPRISES

The literature on surprise has focused almost entirely on how affective mechanisms, such as mental imagery (Wilson et al. 2005; Lee and Qiu 2009), curiosity (Hill, Fombelle, and Sirianni 2015; Van Dijk and Zeelenberg 2007), and optimism (Goldsmith and Amir 2010; Tormala et al. 2012) drive consumers' preference for uncertainty. While these factors certainly play an important role in decisions involving positive uncertainty, we propose that when uncertainty is a

core component of the purchase offering, other effects may also come into play. Specifically, we suggest that the relinquishment of control associated with positive uncertainty will be especially detrimental for men, who tend to be more agentic than women (Bakan 1966; Cross and Madson 1997). Thus, while mental imagery, curiosity, and optimism should be associated with consumers' desire for surprise in general, we propose that only need for control can explain the observed gender effect.

In addition to testing the meditating role of state desire for control and addressing the alternative affect-based mechanisms studied by past literature, in study 2 we also test whether men and women perceive the surprise offering differently. Specifically, it is possible that men perceive the surprise as more risky or women perceive it as more fun. If so, this difference in perception may drive the observed gender effects.

1.7.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 240 Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers (M_{age} = 34.48, range 18-75, 56.7% female) completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment.

Procedure. We used the same scenario as in study 1C. Participants imagined that they were considering buying a bag of healthy snacks for $1 and made a choice between two options - a certain offering ("Snack bag containing healthy Kashi bars") and a surprise offering ("Snack bag containing healthy snacks that are a surprise"). The display order of the two options was randomized and is controlled for in the analysis. After respondents indicated their choice, they rated the extent to which their decision was driven by a desire for control (3 items, example item: "I chose this option because it allowed me to have more control over my reward;" α = .88) rated from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Optimism was operationalized by the extent to

which the consumer's decision was driven by their expectation for something good (3 items, example item: "I chose this option because I expect that it will bring me a lot of joy;" α = .78) rated from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Mental imagery was captured by the extent to which participants focused on imagining the contents of the surprise offering (2 items, r = .82, p <.001; example item: "Imagining all the possible healthy snacks that may be in the SURPRISE bag") and certain offering (2 items, r =.78, p <.001; example item: "Imagining all the possible bars that may be in the KASHI bag") anchored at 1 = not at all to 7 = a lot. We calculated a mental imagery index by subtracting the extent to which consumers thought about the certain offering from the extent to which they thought about the surprise offering. Thus, higher values indicate that consumers thought more about the possible options of the surprise offering versus the contents of the certain offering. Curiosity was measured with one item ("How curious are you to know what is inside the surprise bag?" 1 = not at all curious to 7 = extremely curious). Further, respondents evaluated each of the two choice options on three items – risky, tasty, and fun – on a scale from 1 = not at all to 7 = extremely and provided demographic information.

1.7.2 Analysis and Results

Liking of the certain offering. First of all, we note that there was no difference in how much men (M = 4.30) and women (M = 4.28, F < 1) liked Kashi bars.

Perceptions of the surprise and certain offering. Next, we note that, as expected, the surprise offering was perceived as riskier (M = 5.37) than the certain offering (M = 1.81; F(1, 238) = 743.87, p < .001). Further, men perceived marginally more risk across both offerings (M = 3.70) compared to women (M = 3.48; F(1, 238) = 3.04, p=.08). Importantly, however, the

offering type by gender interaction was not significant (F<1), indicating that men and women did not differ in their perceptions of risk for the surprise offering. Additionally, the surprise offering was perceived as more fun (M = 5.15) than the certain offering (M = 3.58; F(1, 238) = 123.33, p < .001) but as equally tasty and there were no gender effects (F's<1). This suggests that men and women perceived the surprise offering to contain products of similar experiential value. Means are presented in table 1.

Choice. We estimated a binary logistic regression on choice (1 if the surprise option was chosen, 0 otherwise) predicted by gender (1 if female, 0 if male), controlling for mean-centered liking of the certain offering and display order (1 if the certain offering was displayed first, 0 otherwise). Participants were less likely to select the surprise offering when it was presented second (56.3%) than when it was first (68.6%; β = -.93, exp(β) = .40, Wald's χ^2 = 7.55, p = .006). Further, the more participants liked Kashi, the less likely they were to select the surprise (β = -1.14, exp(β) = .32, Wald's χ^2 = 47.71, p < .001). Importantly, controlling for these effects, men were less likely to select the surprise option (56.7%) than women (66.9%; β =.75, exp(β) = 2.02, Wald's χ^2 = 5.03, p = .025).

Table 1: Perceptions of the surprise and certain (Kashi) offerings in study 2

	Risk		Fun		Tastiness	
	Kashi	Surprise	Kashi	Surprise	Kashi	Surprise
Men	1.89	5.51	3.63	5.08	4.63	4.59
Women	1.72	5.24	3.52	5.21	4.55	4.53

Note: All differences between men and women are not significant (p's>.20).

Desire for control. A logistic regression on choice, controlling for liking of Kashi (β = -.79, exp(β) = .45, Wald's χ^2 = 7.13, p = .008) and display order (β = -1.35, exp(β) = .26, Wald's χ^2 = 3.58, p =.058), indicated a significant effect of desire for control (β = -1.99, exp(β) = .14,

Wald's $\chi^2 = 44.86$, $p < .001$). The more participants desired to stay in control, the less likely they were to select the surprise option. Importantly, the one-way ANOVA with desire for control as the dependent variable and gender as the predictor indicated that men reported higher desire to stay in control over their purchase ($M = 3.87$) than women ($M = 3.25$, $F(1, 238) = 6.04$, $p = .015$). To test whether desire for control mediated the effect of gender on choice, we conducted mediation analyses using bootstrapping (Hayes 2012; Model 4), controlling for mean-centered liking of the certain offering and display order. Results confirmed that desire for control mediated choice (indirect effect = - 1.33, SE = .65, 95% CI: -2.46 to -.21; direct effect of gender = 1.08, SE=.77, $p = .16$).

Alternative mechanisms. Next, we looked at whether the affect-based mechanisms can explain the observed gender effect. A logistic regression on choice with mean-centered optimism, curiosity, and mental imagery index as predictors, liking of the certain offering and display order as the covariates indicated that all three affect-based mechanisms predicted choice of the surprise offering (optimism: $\beta = 1.23$, $\exp(\beta) = 3.41$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 21.62$, $p < .001$; curiosity: $\beta = 1.05$, $\exp(\beta) = 2.86$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 12.54$, $p < .001$; imagery: $\beta = .39$, $\exp(\beta) = 1.47$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 6.60$, $p = .01$). This is in line with past literature which suggests that these processes can increase consumer's preference for uncertainty. Yet, a MANOVA indicated that men and women did not differ in the extent to which they engaged in mental imagery ($M_{men} = 1.37$, $M_{women} = 1.42$), or felt optimistic ($M_{men} = 4.73$, $M_{women} = 4.89$) and curious ($M_{men} = 5.48$, $M_{women} = 5.80$; Pillai's Trace = .013, $F(3, 236) = 1.01$, $p = .39$).

1.7.3 Discussion

This study replicated our main finding that men prefer surprise offerings to a lesser extent than women do (hypothesis 1) and provided several important insights about the underlying mechanism. Specifically, we found support for hypothesis 2: desire for control mediated the observed effect of gender on choice such that men's preference for the certain option was driven by their unwillingness to relinquish control. Furthermore, consistent with past literature on positive uncertainty (Lee and Qiu 2009; Hill et al. 2015), results showed that heightened mental imagery, curiosity, and optimism increased consumers' preference for the surprise. However, these affect-focused mechanisms could not explain the gender difference in participants' choices of the surprise offering vs. the certain option.

Finally, we demonstrated that, compared to the certain offering, the surprise offering was considered risker by both men and women, supporting our proposition that surprise offerings involve a heightened level of uncertainty. Additionally, this finding helps us rule out the alternative explanation that men avoid surprises because they perceive heightened risk compared to women. Moreover, surprises were considered to be more fun but equally tasty compared to a certain offering. This suggests that consumers perceive surprise offerings to be in the domain of gains as we argued earlier. Notably, these perceptions did not differ based on participant's gender and cannot explain the observed effect.

One concern about study 2 may be that people often lack introspective insight about the higher-order processes that drive their decisions (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). Hence, our mediation measure may not reflect the real drivers of choice. To address this concern, in the next two studies we provide additional process evidence by manipulating the desire for control in two different ways (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). The next study aims to demonstrate that the

gender difference in preference for surprise is weakened when the desire to be in control is attenuated by providing participants with choice.

1.8 STUDY 3: JUICY SURPRISES

In the studies discussed so far participants made a decision by evaluating a surprise offering against a certain alternative. While joint evaluations are very common in a purchase context (e.g., should I purchase a surprise box with uncertain snacks or go to store and pick a known set of snacks), sometimes consumers may engage in separate evaluation of the surprise offering (e.g., how much do I like this surprise box; Nowlis and Simonson 1997). In general, joint evaluation leads individuals to perceive contrasts between the multiple items they view (Bazerman et al. 1999; Hsee et al. 1999), which may have increased the size of our effects in prior studies. Thus, it is important to understand whether men and women differ in their response to the surprise offering when it is judged in isolation

More importantly, it is necessary to investigate whether aspects of the surprise offering decision can make the surprise product equally appealing to men and women. To propose a practical means of doing so, we draw on the research on personal control. This literature suggests that the ability to exert choice increases one's perception of control (Averill 1973; Hui and Bateson 1991; Langer 1975), even if one does not, in reality, have full control over an outcome. Thus, we argue that allowing participants to choose some aspect of the surprise offering (e.g., one of the surprise snacks) will reinforce their sense of control over the experience, even though some uncertainty is retained. Since men are particularly sensitive to the loss of control associated

with surprise, we expect that experiencing some control over the contents of the surprise offering would enhance their evaluation but would not influence women's evaluation.

Thus, in study 3 we manipulate whether participants can select none vs. some of the products to be received in a surprise offering. We expect that as before, when the offering consists entirely of surprise items, women will have more positive evaluation of a surprise offering than men. However, when participants are allowed to select one or more of the items that the surprise offering will contain, the enhanced feeling of control will increase the appeal of the surprise offering to men (but will not change women's evaluations).

1.8.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 343 undergraduate students (40% female) from two large universities completed the study in exchange for course credit. Since university did not predict any of the outcomes, we collapsed the sample across this factor. We note that the results hold if we control for university. One participant did not follow the instructions and was excluded from the analysis. The study used a 3 (choice condition: no-choice, one-choice, three-choice) x 2 (gender: female, male) between-subjects design with random assignment to the first factor.

Procedure. Participants were shown a screenshot of a fictitious but realistic "Juicy Surprise Box" website – a monthly subscription service of six surprise juice drink samples. Participants in the no choice condition were informed that all flavors in their box would be a surprise. Participants in the one-choice (three-choice) condition were asked to select, one (three) flavors from a choice set of 10 flavors. The surprise and choice flavors were constructed in a way to ensure maximum similarity among conditions.

To create a more realistic experience, participants waited for 15 seconds for their surprise box to "arrive" and then saw a list of all six juice flavors in their surprise box. Next, we captured evaluation of the surprise box (desirable, appealing, attractive; $\alpha = .94$; anchored at 1= not at all and 7=extremely) and product satisfaction with the surprise box (satisfied, happy, excited, disappointed [reverse-scored], and upset [reverse-scored]; $\alpha = .83$; anchored at 1= not at all and 7=extremely) in counterbalanced order. The two indices were highly correlated ($r=.75$, $p<.001$) and therefore, for the sake of brevity, we report only the results on product evaluation. To gauge future purchase intentions, participants rated their likelihood of visiting the juice online store to shop for full-sized juice bottles on a scale from 1=extremely unlikely to 7=extremely likely. Finally, they indicated how much they enjoyed waiting to see the contents of the surprise box (waiting was: pleasurable, enjoyable, annoying; $\alpha = .62$; rated from 1=not at all to 7=extremely). We added this measure as a proxy for mental imagery, expecting that consumers would enjoy waiting more if they generate more positive thoughts about the surprise box. Since there were no difference in waiting enjoyment between men and women, we do not discuss this further.

After a short filler task which was identical for everyone and designed to dissipate the effect of the choice manipulation and the surprise scenario, respondents rated their general liking of 15 juice flavors on a scale anchored at "dislike extremely" (1), "neither like nor dislike" (4), and "like extremely" (7). The 15 juice flavors were displayed in a random order and included the 6 flavors each participant imagined receiving in their surprise box.

1.8.2 Analysis and Results

Pre-test. To ensure that the choice manipulation changed perceptions of control equally for men and women, we conducted a pre-test on a sample from the same population. A total of 103

participants (51% women) saw the same stimuli as the experimental group and were assigned to one of the three choice conditions. Next, participants indicated the extent to which they felt in control over the surprise offering ("How much control do you feel you have over the contents of the surprise box?" and "To what extent do you feel in control of the surprise box?" on a scale anchored at 1= no control at all to 7= a lot of control; r=.74, p <.001). We also measured participants' preference for the category ("In general, how much do you like juice" on a scale from 1=not at all to 7=to a great extent). A two-way ANOVA on perceived control with choice condition and gender provided the expected main effect of choice condition ($F(2, 97) = 23.50$, p <.001) such that participants felt the greatest control in the three-choice condition (M = 4.04), followed by the one-choice condition (M = 2.87), and the no-choice condition (M = 1.96; all marginal comparisons are significant at p <.005). Neither the effect of gender nor its interaction was significant (F's<1). Hence, the manipulation was successful at creating a feeling of control in the two choice conditions. Further, there was no difference in the extent to which men (M = 4.90) and women (M = 4.91) liked juice (F<1).

Product evaluation. First, we note that there was no difference in the number of males and females assigned to each choice condition (χ^2 (2,342) =3.18, p = .20; cell sizes ranged from 39 to 77). While no main effects were significant, the interaction of gender by choice on product evaluation was marginally-significant ($F(2, 336) = 2.78$, p = .06, see figure 3). Planned contrasts indicated a significant gender difference in the no-choice condition such that men evaluated the surprise offering less favorably (M = 4.91) than women did (M = 5.47, $F(1, 336) = 5.11$, p = .02). Notably, in both conditions where some choice was provided, the gender difference was not significant (one-choice condition: M_{men} = 5.38, M_{women} = 5.15, F < 1; three-choice condition: M_{men} = 5.09, M_{women} = 5.42, $F(1, 336) = 1.81$, p = .18). To test whether choice changed men's

evaluation of the surprise, we examined the simple main effect of choice condition for men ($F(2, 336) = 2.36$, $p = .096$). Compared to the no-choice condition ($M = 4.91$), men's evaluations of the surprise box increased in the one-choice condition ($M = 5.38$; $p = .03$) but not in the three-choice condition ($M = 5.09$, $p = .40$). Women's evaluation of the surprise offering did not differ among choice conditions ($F < 1$).

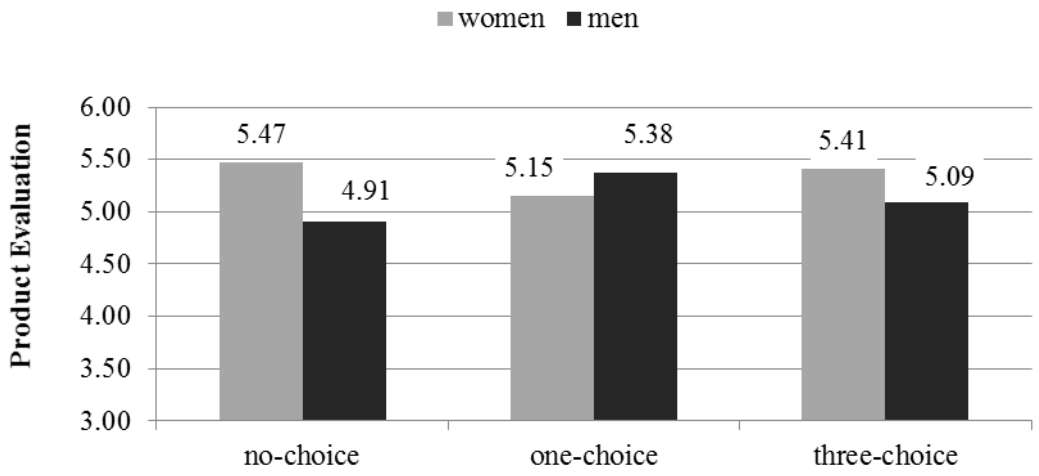


Figure 3: Surprise Box Evaluation by Gender and Choice Condition

Future purchase intentions. A two-way ANOVA with gender, choice condition, and their interaction indicated a marginally-significant interaction ($F(2, 336) = 2.81$, $p = .06$, see figure 4). Planned contrasts revealed a marginal difference in the no-choice condition such that women had higher future purchase intentions ($M = 3.85$) than men ($M = 3.22$; $F(1, 336) = 3.26$, $p = .07$). Further, there was a marginal difference in men's purchase intentions across conditions ($F(2, 336) = 2.73$, $p = .07$) such that, compared to the no-choice condition ($M = 3.22$), men's willingness to purchase full sized juice product increased in the one-choice condition ($M = 3.79$; $p = .06$) but not in the three-choice condition ($M = 3.12$, $p > .7$).

1.8.3 Discussion

Study 3 suggests that when evaluating a surprise box in isolation, men report less favorable product evaluation with the surprise offering compared to women. Further, women reported slightly higher future purchase intentions than men, which suggests that men's dislike of surprise offerings can have important downstream consequences.

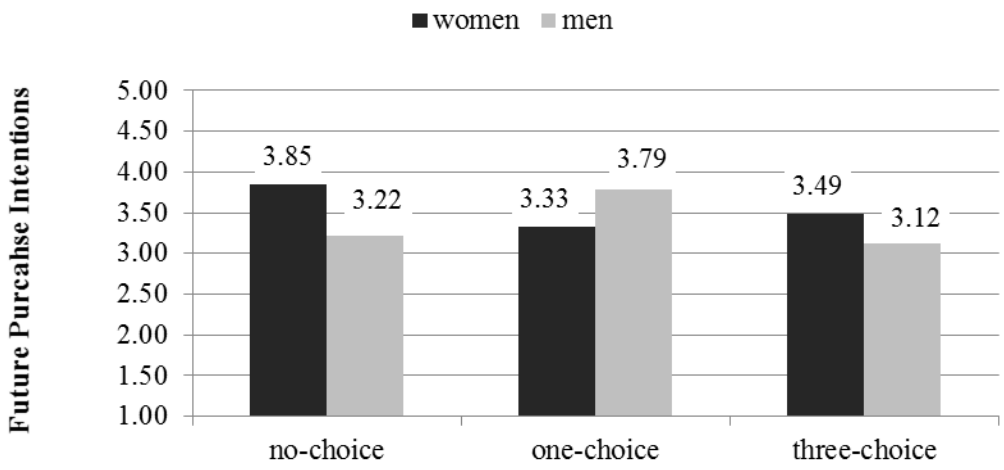


Figure 4: Future Purchase Intentions by Gender and Choice Condition

However, this study also suggested that allowing consumers some control over the surprise offering led to more positive evaluations for men without changing women's (already positive) evaluations in support of hypothesis 3. Thus, we provide additional evidence of the underlying mechanism using a moderation-of-process design (Spencer et al. 2005) and highlight one practical way in which marketers can make surprise offerings more appealing to male consumers.

Interestingly, we note that there was no difference between men's evaluation and purchase intentions in the no-choice vs. three-choice conditions. We speculate that men may have a smaller set of favorite flavors in this product category compared to women, who are typically the primary grocery shopper in the household (Inman, Winer, and Ferraro 2009) and

could thus be more familiar with different juice flavors. Thus, asking men to select more than one flavor may have created choice difficulty and offset the positive effect of increased control (Broniarczyk, Hoyer, and McAlister 1998; Iyengar and Lepper 2000).

Relatedly, one may be concerned that the enhanced evaluation of the surprise offering in the one-choice vs. no-choice conditions for men can be explained by men's ability to match their preferences rather than the effect of enhanced sense of control. To address this, we calculated the average liking of the juice flavors in the surprise box for each participant. Note that, though related (r =.51, p <.001), average liking of the juice flavors is conceptually different from evaluation of the box. The first variable captures participants' tastes in the juice category while the second captures an overall evaluation of the surprise box. We tested whether the average liking of the flavors received in the surprise box mediated men's product evaluation, product satisfaction, and future purchase intentions in the one-choice vs. no-choice conditions using bootstrapping (Hayes 2012; Model 4). Average liking of the flavors received did not mediate the effect for any of the three dependent variables (product satisfaction: indirect effect = .09, 95% CI: -.06 to .22; direct effect= .33, p=.025; product evaluation: indirect effect = .10, 95% CI: -.06 to .27; direct effect = .37, p = .06; purchase intentions: indirect effect = .06, 95% CI: -.02 to .25; direct effect = .51, p = .07). Thus, the effect in the no-choice vs. one-choice condition for men does not seem to be driven by men's greater ability to create a more desirable juice bundle. Rather, it appears that partial choice within a surprise offering may provide a feeling of control that raises its appeal to men, but too much choice may undermine other positive aspects of uncertainty.

While companies can provide some actual control to consumers, sometimes this may not be practical or possible. Additionally, allowing consumers to choose parts of the surprise bundle

would decrease the uncertainty associated with the product. Thus, the next study was designed to test a different way of attenuating the desire of control.

1.9 STUDY 4: LET IT GO!

1.9.1 Method

Participants and Design. Two-hundred and eighty Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers who indicated being familiar with the certain offering completed this study for a small payment. The study used a 2 (control manipulation: let-go, baseline) x 2 (gender: female, male) between-subjects design with random assignment to the first factor.

Procedure. The study was disguised as two ostensibly unrelated tasks. The control manipulation task was presented as an evaluation of a blog post to be used in a future study. Participants were asked to read a short text that discussed either the importance of letting go of control (let-go condition) or the importance of exercising one's brain (baseline condition). Both texts were carefully worded to include similar phrases and have similar structure and length and pre-tested to ensure that they did not differ in induced affect. To ensure that participants actually read the blog post, they were asked to list the three most persuasive arguments mentioned in it. Next, consistent with the cover story, they indicated how easy to follow, easy to understand, and interesting the blog post was. These measures are not relevant to purpose of the study and are not discussed further.

The second, ostensibly unrelated, task presented the purchase scenario from Study 2. The order of the surprise and certain offering was randomized and since there were no order effects,

this variable is not discussed further. Next, participants rated the extent to which they perceived the surprise and certain offerings to be control-enhancing (2 items: "gives me a lot of control over my choice", "requires the relinquishment of control", $r_{surprise}$= -.24, r_{Kashi}= -37, *p*'s < .001; we note that analyzing the variables separately provides the same results), as well as risky and fun. Finally, we captured mental imagery by measuring the extent to which participants thought about the possible snacks in the certain and surprise bags. There were no notable differences and mental imagery did not predict choice and we do not discuss this measure further.

To ensure that participants read the manipulation, two research assistants, who were blind to the study hypothesis, indicated whether at least one of the three responses provided by each participant represented an argument mentioned in the respective blog post. The research assistants agreed on 87.5% of the participants (Kappa=.59) and disagreements were resolved through discussion. Participants who did not provide at least one meaningful argument ($N_{let\text{-}go\ condition}$ = 13 and $N_{baseline}$ = 32) were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the final sample consists of 235 participants (M_{age} = 36.36, range 19-73, 54.5% female).

1.9.2 Analysis and Results

Liking of the certain offering. Men reported liking Kashi as much (*M* = 4.46) as women (*M* = 4.44) and there was no difference between conditions (all *F'*s<1).

Perceptions of the surprise and certain offering. We conducted three separate mixed ANOVAs with risk, fun, and control ratings as the dependent variables and offering type (within-subjects factor), condition, gender (between-subjects factors), and display order as the predictors. For the sake of brevity, we report here only the results that are of interest to this research.

We observed the expected main effect of offering type in each of the three analyses. The surprise offering was rated as more risky ($M_{surprise}$ = 5.06 vs. $M_{certain}$ = 1.70; $F(1, 230) = 733.20$, $p < .001$) and more fun than the certain offering ($M_{surprise}$ = 5.33 vs. $M_{certain}$ = 3.52; $F(1, 230) = 178.05$, $p < .001$). Further, the certain offering provided more control over one's purchase (M = 5.96) compared to the surprise offering (M = 2.11; $F(1, 230) = 880.59$, $p < .001$). Note that this result is in line with our reasoning that choosing the certain offering allows one to retain control over the purchased product.

Choice. First, we note that the proportion of women is marginally higher in the baseline condition (N_{women}= 69, N_{men} = 46) than in the let-go condition (N_{women} = 59, N_{men} = 61; χ^2 (1,235) = 2.78, p =.10). We estimated a binary logistic regression on choice (1 if the surprise option was chosen, 0 otherwise) predicted by gender (1 if female, -1 if male), control condition (1 if let-go condition, -1 if baseline), their interaction, and controlling for mean-centered liking of the certain offering. The effect of liking Kashi (β = -.86, exp(β) = .42, Wald's χ^2 = 40.27, $p < .001$), gender (β = .41, exp(β) = 1.51, Wald's χ^2 = 6.77, p = .01), and condition (β = 0.28, exp(β) = 1.32, Wald's χ^2 = 3.08, p = .08) were significant. Importantly, the interaction of condition by gender was significant (β = -.31, exp(β) = .73, Wald's χ^2 = 4.01, p =.045). We conducted three follow-up contrasts (Eye and Mun 2013). First, in the baseline condition women had higher log-odds compared to men (β = 1.48, exp(β) = 4.39, Wald's χ^2 = 10.04, p =.002), replicating our main finding that men prefer surprise offerings less often (39%) than women (65%). Second, the results showed that men's log-odds of choosing the surprise option in the baseline condition were lower than the average log-odds in the other three conditions (β = -1.35, exp(β) = .26, Wald's χ^2 = 11.23, p =.001). In other words, men in the baseline condition were significantly less likely to select the surprise offering (39%) compared to participants in the other three conditions

(63%). Finally, the difference in choice for men in the let-go (61%) vs. baseline conditions was significant ($\beta = 1.18$, $\exp(\beta) = 3.25$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 6.57$, $p = .01$), indicating that men in the let-go condition were 3.25 times more likely to select the surprise offering than men in the baseline condition.

1.9.3 Discussion

This study replicated the effect of gender on surprise offering choice (hypothesis 1) and provided evidence about the underlying mechanism using a moderation-of-process design (Spencer et al. 2005). Specifically, when consumers' desire for control was not manipulated, we replicated the finding that women pick the surprise offering more often than men. However, when consumers were encouraged to relinquish control, men switched their preference in favor of the surprise offering (hypothesis 3) and the gender difference disappeared.

1.10 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The scarce literature on consumer response to surprises has demonstrated that token surprises improve consumer mood (Valenzuela et al. 2010; Wilson et al. 2005) and motivate purchase behavior (Heilman, Nakamoto, and Rao 2002; Janakiraman et al. 2006; Goldsmith and Amir 2010; Hill et al. 2015). Yet, it is unclear whether all consumers would opt to purchase an uncertain over a certain offering. The current paper contributes to the research of decision making under uncertainty by classifying surprises into two broad categories – token surprises (e.g., unexpected gifts, uncertain promotions) and surprise offerings (for-sale mystery products,

surprise boxes) – and suggesting that the decision-making process associated with each type of surprise differs in important theoretical and practical ways. Namely, we propose that, while uncertainty plays a peripheral role in the case of token surprises, it is a core element of surprise offerings and leads to increased loss of control over the purchase. Rather than offering agency, as would most purchase decisions, the surprise offering purchase offers no control over the purchase's outcome.

It is this denial of agency that leads us to predict a gender difference in the appeal of surprise offerings. We demonstrate that men are less likely to choose a surprise offering compared to women due to their reluctance to relinquish control over their purchase. We test this effect in five studies across a number of hedonic, utilitarian, and experiential product domains, using not only hypothetical scenarios in the lab, but also real purchases made by consumers. Next, we provide evidence that desire for control drives men's dislike of surprise offerings and show that the affect-based mechanisms (e.g., curiosity, mental imagery, optimism) studied in the prior literature on surprise cannot explain the observed gender effect. Additionally, our findings contribute to the literature on risk taking by demonstrating that surprise offerings is one domain in which men's decisions are consistent with risk aversion while women's – with risk seeking.

It is important to note that previous literature on surprise and positive uncertainty, which has mostly focused on token surprises, has not discussed gender differences in the evaluation of surprises. This result is in line with our argument that 1) in promotions involving an uncertain gift, consumers relinquish control to a lesser degree since they remain in control of the purchase of the core (known) product and 2) in the case of windfall surprises, the feeling of control is not important since the surprise is not dependent on a purchase. Further, our results extend rather than contradict the findings of Hill et al. (2015) which suggest that curiosity drives consumer's

purchase intentions for surprise offerings. In study 2 we show that curiosity indeed increases the likelihood of selecting the surprise offering but it does not explain the observed gender effect.

There are several potential boundary conditions of the observed gender effect that deserve attention. First, the certain offering that consumers compare the surprise offering to plays an important role in the purchase consideration. Our results indicate that the more consumers liked the known item, the more likely they are to select that item over the surprise offering regardless of their need for control. Thus, if the known alternative is strongly liked by women (disliked by men), the results may reverse, such that women (men) may be more likely to select the known (surprise) offering.

Second, in all studies we kept the decision in the domain of gains by keeping all purchase alternatives in the same product category and providing cues that the surprise offering includes desirable items. Our manipulation checks showed that while consumers perceived the surprise offering to be risker than the certain offering, they also perceived it to be more fun and of equal quality (studies 2 and 3) compared to the certain offering. Therefore, we expect that making the surprise offering ostensibly riskier (e.g., by providing cues that the product could be either very desirable or very undesirable) may decrease its appeal to consumers, regardless of their need for control.

Third, we note that all studies were conducted with US participants and thus, may not generalize to other cultures. For example, Valenzuela et al. (2010) suggest that consumers in Western societies react more positively to surprise gifts compared to consumers in Eastern (Asian) societies. Furthermore, Schmitt et al. (2008) reveal that gender differences in personality traits are bigger in prosperous, healthy, and egalitarian cultures such as the US or Western Europe. Future research could explore this question.

The results in this paper have important implications for consumers as well as practitioners. Specifically, our findings suggest consumers purchasing gifts for others should be aware that a surprise box subscription may be more appealing to women than men. Further, surprise offerings targeted towards female segments may be more successful than those targeted towards male segments. For example, we would predict that Living Social will be more successful offering female rather than male mystery watches.

More importantly, we demonstrate that surprise offerings can be appealing to men if they are allowed to feel in control of the purchase decision or if they are convinced to let go of control. Thus, companies can use appeals to remind consumers that it is acceptable to give up control sometimes or can allow them to choose some aspects of the surprise offering in order to satisfy their need for control. In study 4 we manipulate the desire for control by allowing participants to select one of the components of the surprise offering. While this may not always be feasible for companies, enhancing the feeling of control by allowing consumers to select the exact time when they will receive the surprise or the specific packaging of the surprise may be an alternative way to create an illusion of control (Langer 1975).

Our work offers fruitful avenues for future research. For example, it will be interesting to examine whether giving consumers a lot of choice regarding the surprise may backfire and lead to more dissatisfaction. Research has shown that too much choice can be overwhelming and create choice difficulty (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). We seem to find some evidence of the boundary effect of choice in study 4 where we found that men's evaluation of the surprise box did not differ between the no-choice and three-choice conditions. Notably, increased choice did not change women's response to the surprise offering. These results suggest that category familiarity or knowledge about one's own favorites may moderate the effect (Broniarczyk et al.

1998). Future research may examine how much choice and choice over which aspects of the surprise offering provide the best experience for both genders.

Another important individual difference that future research could consider is category knowledge. Does expertise make consumers more attracted to surprise offerings? Our intuition is that the perceived breadth and depth of the products in the surprise offerings will determine the direction of this effect (Clarkson, Janiszewski, and Cinelli 2013). Surprise offerings that include a wide range of flavors from one brand (depth of knowledge) may be more appealing to category experts while surprise offerings that include a wide range of different types of snacks (breadth of knowledge) may be more appealing to category novices. It will be interesting to examine whether this match between expertise and offerings selection will attenuate the gender effect for one of the two groups of consumers.

2.0 TO HOST, OR BE A GUEST, THAT IS THE QUESTION: INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF ASYMMETRIC RESOURCE INVESTMENTS ON THE ENJOYMENT OF GROUP CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

From occasion-themed parties and celebrations (e.g., birthday parties, summer barbeque get-togethers), to community groups or clubs (e.g., meet-up groups, book clubs, running groups) and organized family holidays and backpacking trips, consumers engage in numerous planned group experiences. These experiences are not only ubiquitous in our everyday lives, but they also have important economic and social implications.

Get-togethers generate economic value thorough the consumption opportunities during the event (e.g., the food or entertainment consumed during the party) as well as the use of the numerous services designed to facilitate the organization of these activities. For example, one can create an event page for her "P<.05 Party" using Eventbrite.com, send invitations to research savvy academics using Greenvelope.com, purchase p-shaped party supplies from the Oriental Trading Company and decorations from Crate and Barrel's "Wine & Cheese Party" Pinterest board, get recipes from Martha Stewart's "Martha's Entertaining: A Year of Celebrations" book, make a shopping list for the ANOVA appetizers (Alcohol, Nachos, Olives, Veggies, Almonds) with ProPartyPlanner.com, and purchase group board games from Amazon in case the guests

don't have many "p<.05" stories to share or the mood becomes too dire… To ensure that someone actually shows up at the party, one can invite strangers, using meal-sharing apps such as EatWith, Feastly, Mealsharing, Kitchensurfing, CookApp, Cookening.

The Meeting Professional International estimates the size of the US event industry at 1.8 million events, generating $280 billion in spending annually (MPI 2015). Similarly, data from the United Kingdom show that parents spend $28,000 on a child's birthdays through age 21 (Taylor 2016) and that another frequently organized event, bachelor's and bachelorette's ("stag" and "hen") parties, generates over $7 billion in consumer spending annually (Warr 2011).

Beyond their economic impact, group experiences have important implications for consumer well-being. Such events enable social interactions and help build relationships, which research in psychology have consistently linked to increased happiness (Berscheid and Reis, 1998; Leary and Baumeister, 2000; Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005; Myers, 2000; Reis and Gable, 2003; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Kraut and Johnston, 1979; Moisio and Beruchashvili 2010). Thus, the opportunities for social connection that group events create increase consumers' well-being.

Despite the fact that a large segment of the experiential economy is devoted to larger and more complex group events with significant economic and social influence, little research has examined the utility that consumers obtain from such social occasions. Past work in marketing has mainly focused on dyadic groups and on situations where all parties are assumed to make a symmetric resource investment in the decision making process (Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014; Huang et al. 2015; Ramanathan and McGill 2007) or on group experiences where all members of a group are considered roughly equal in their roles (Ariely and Levav 2000; Bhargave and Montgomery 2013) In contrast, in the present paper we propose that, when consumers take part

in planned events involving larger groups, consumers' investments are asymmetric: some assume the role of host and take responsibility over the creation and management of the group experience while others assume the role of guest and contribute little beyond their personal participation. The asymmetry in these two social roles impacts the anticipated and experienced outcomes of joint experiences. We show that, in prospect, consumers anchor on the greater resource investments associated with hosting and predict that guests would derive more value from an experience relative to hosts. Contrary to people's lay beliefs, however, we find that hosts ultimately enjoy the group consumption experience more than guests do. This effect is driven by experiencing flow and busyness. Further, we suggest ways how to mitigate the misprediction in anticipated enjoyment and encourage more consumers to host events and how to increase the actual enjoyment that guests experience compared to hosts.

These findings extend the literature on social influence in several important ways. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to examine consumers' satisfaction with joint experiences which involve asymmetric contributions. We also conceptualize the social role of a host (vs. a guest) in consumption experiences and differentiate it from the related construct of a manager or leader in the organizational literature. In addition to showing a robust case of affective misforecasting that occurs contingent on these contributions, we identify the process by which consumers' roles translate into actual experience. Further, unlike most of the literature which has focused on one focal consumer or a dyad, we focus on groups which involve more than two participants, thus opening the door to future research into these more complex consumption contexts. Finally, we study the experience of all participants engaged in the consumption event, thus proving a multidimensional picture of the consumption phenomenon. Next, we discuss the theoretical framework and propose our hypotheses.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1 Group consumption experiences

Most of the literature on consumer behaviors in social contexts has focused on how others influence a focal consumer (Argo, Dahl, and Morales 2008; Ariely and Levav 2000; Herman, Roth, and Polivy 2003; McFerran al. 2010; McFerran and Argo 2014; Ratner and Kahn 2002; White and Argo 2011). An area that has received much less attention concerns the consumption of shared experiences. Group experiences involve the interdependent participation of two or more consumers with the common goal of experiencing an event (Aronson, Wilson, and Akert 2015). Research has shown that, compared to solo experiences, joint experiences are enjoyed more (Ramanathan and McGill 2007), especially when the consumer's evaluation of the shared stimuli is in agreement with that of the other participants (Raghunathan and Corfman 2006; Reis et al. 2010). Yet, this research has focused almost entirely on studying shared experiences in dyads and assumed that all parties contribute equally to the event.

We argue that, as the size of the group increases, so do the demands associated with the organization of the event, which in turn necessitates the assignment of social roles and shared norms that guide the group members' behaviors (Aronson et al. 2015). In group consumption experiences, the roles that consumers assume most frequently are those of a host and a guest. We define hosts as group members who provide important resources for the execution of the event and/or are responsible for its organization and management. Hosts have greater control over the agenda of the experience and are highly engaged in the occasion or theme of the event. As part of their hosting responsibilities, hosts pay more attention to the rest of the group, monitoring others' enjoyment and needs. On the other hand, guests participate in the experience but are not

the focal providers or organizers. Yet, guests are not completely devoid of control – they keep control over the extent of their participation (e.g., when to leave, how much to engage with others). Table 2 summarizes the conceptualization of the two roles. As it can be seen from the table, the contributions of guests and hosts to a group consumption experience are asymmetric: hosts are expected to invest more personal resources into the creation and management of the group consumption experience than guests.

Importantly, being a host is theoretically different from being a leader, as discussed in the management literature. A leader is an individual who "mobilizes the aid of others in the attainment of a collective goal" (Chemers 2001; p. 376). In other words, a leader is responsible for managing the resources (effort, skills, knowledge) that the rest of the group contributes in pursuit of a desired outcome. In contrast, a host invests her own resources to create consumption opportunities aimed at maximizing the individual enjoyment goals of all group members through the shared experience. Given the asymmetric amount of work that a host is expected to invest compared to guests, we predict differences in both anticipated and experienced enjoyment of the group consumption experience, which we discuss next.

Table 2: Contributions of Hosts and Guests to the Group Consumption Event

	Hosts	**Guests**
Resource investments: • Time to coordinate the event • Effort to prepare the venue and activities • Money to provide event-related amenities (food, drinks) • Other shareable resources (house, music)	HIGH	LOW
Responsibility: • Before the event (e.g., scheduling) • During the event (e.g., greet guests, troubleshoot) • After the event (e.g., cleaning)	HIGH	LOW
Control over the content of the experience: • What will be consumed (food, drinks, movies, conversations)	HIGH	LOW

Control over one's participation in the experience:		
• When to begin and end participation in the event (arrive/leave the party)	LOW	HIGH
• Extent to which one socializes with others or engages in the party activities		
Personal involvement:		
• Interest and engagement in the theme of the party or the occasion	HIGH	LOW
Interdependence of own enjoyment and that of others:		
• Obtains enjoyment not only from the experience itself but also from observing the enjoyment of others	HIGH	LOW

2.2.2 Consumers' Predictions: Work ≠ fun

We propose that, in prospect, hosts will anchor on the work involved in the organization and management of the event while guests will focus on the experience itself. Given that goal-specific mindsets can facilitate goal completion (Gollwitzer 2011; Gollwitzer et al. 2011; Gollwitzer and Bayer 1999), hosts are likely to assume an implementation mindset and focus on the effort-related activities they need to complete. In contrast, guests, who have low contributions to the event, may assume an evaluation mindset and focus on the experience of the event itself. In other words, we expect that hosts' evaluations will anchor on the feasibility of the event (i.e., what do I need to do), while guests' evaluations will anchor on the desirability of the event (i.e., how much fun will I have). The differential focus for hosts vs. guests may lead to differences in anticipated enjoyment between the two roles for several reasons.

First, work and fun are considered as two separate, mutually exclusive dimensions of volitional behaviors (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Laran and Janiszewski 2011). As hosts are expected to work more than guests, they may anticipate fewer opportunities for enjoyment compared to guests. Further, effortful activities are depleting (Muraven, Tice, and Baumeister 1998; Pocheptsova et al. 2009; Vohs and Faber 2007) and lead to increased negative affect

(Hagger et al. 2010; Ciarocco, Sommer, and Baumeister 2001; Stewart et al. 2009) and decreased performance on subsequent tasks (Segerstrom & Nes, 2007; Wright et al., 2007, 2008). Taxing tasks are also perceived as more stressful (Sells 1970; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) which may lead to decreased satisfaction (Diener and Chan 2011; Suh et al. 1996; Zika and Chamberlain 1987). Thus, hosts may anticipate that the stress and fatigue from organizing and managing the group event will compromise their ability to enjoy it (Muraven, Shmueli, and Burkley 2006). On the other hand, given that they are not responsible for any of the work involved in a group activity, guests may believe that they will have greater opportunity to engage in the experience, which, in turn, can bring greater happiness. Formally, we predict:

H_1: Guests will anticipate greater enjoyment of the group consumption experience compared to hosts.

2.2.3 Consumers' Experiences: Investment = enjoyment

While people's lay beliefs may favor being a guest, several streams of research suggest that hosts may extract greater experiential utility than guests.

First, consider the greater autonomy and control that hosts have over the group consumption experience. The general feeling of being in control has been associated with greater satisfaction and happiness (Dwyer and Ganster 1991; Zeidner and Ben-Zur 2013; Folker 1984; Peterson 1999; Geers et al. 2013), suggesting that hosts should derive more happiness from group events relative to guests. Further, by taking the responsibility over the event, hosts are able to construct the joint experience in a way that can match their own preferences. For example, hosts can purchase food and drinks that they like and plan for activities that they enjoy. Additionally, hosts can create a self-defining experience which represents their own values and

in doing so, brings them more happiness (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner 2014). In sum, hosts (vs. guests) may extract greater utility because they can customize the event to match their preferences and values.

Second, consider the increased personal resources that the host invests in the event compared to the guest. The literature on co-creation of material goods has shown that investing time and effort in the creation process leads to greater satisfaction with the result (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser, 2010; Franke and Schreier 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; Norton, Mochon, and Ariely, 2012), especially when consumers have high involvement in the category (Franke, Keinz, and Steger 2009). The allure of self-created products is driven by consumers' feelings of pride and competence experienced as a result of the creative process (Mochon et al. 2012). Drawing a parallel, we propose that the asymmetrically greater resource investments that hosts make may create feelings of pride and accomplishment, leading to higher experienced enjoyment of the event.

Moreover, as the host enables the occurrence of the event, she has greater impact on the group and greater prominence (Latane 1981). The central role of the host at the event can increase her connectedness to the rest of the group (McFerran and Argo 2014). The opportunity for greater social interaction and the subjective feelings of connectedness may generate positive emotions, especially when the host feels appreciated by others (Reis et al. 2000). Therefore, hosts may experience greater satisfaction because of their greater connectedness to the rest of the group.

Next, consider the greater extent to which hosts are engaged in the experience compared to guests. The numerous responsibilities of hosting are likely to induce feelings of busyness (Hsee et al 2010). Being busy engages attention with both internal (thoughts, feelings) and

external (people, places) stimuli and ultimately leads to increased positive affect (Eastwood et al. 2010; Hsee et al 2010; Ariely, Kamenica, and Prelec 2008; Rosenbaum et al. 2014). Hence, the busy host may experience greater enjoyment of the group event compared to the less busy guest. Relatedly, the literature on flow further corroborates this prediction. Flow is the active state of immersion in a challenging but rewarding activity and is characterized by several subjective experiences including complete concentration on the task at hand and a sense of control over one's experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; 1997; Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Research has demonstrated that the experience of flow leads to greater intrinsic value of the activity and enhanced enjoyment (Hektner and Asakawa 2000; Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Given the conceptualization of hosting as a high in control and resource demanding activity, hosts are likely to experience greater flow than guests, suggesting that hosts may experience greater enjoyment than guests. In sum, hosts' increased busyness and engagement with the event may drive their increased satisfaction.

Finally, it is possible that host's evaluation of the event is influenced by cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957; Gino 2008). Cognitive dissonance is the psychological discomfort which one experiences when one's beliefs and behaviors conflict. As the host has invested more resources than anyone else in the group, an unsatisfactory experience at the event may be perceived as inconsistency between the host's behaviors and attitudes. She may strive to resolve this inconsistency by convincing herself that she really enjoyed the party. Thus, the boost of enjoyment for hosts may be driven by a motivational mechanism rather than actual utility extracted from the event.

The above review of the literature clearly suggests that hosts will enjoy the shared experience more than guests. Further, we expect that hosts will exhibit affective mis-forecasting

such that their anticipated enjoyment will be lower than their actual enjoyment. Finally, we will test several potential mediators in order to understand what drives these results. Formally, we hypothesize:

H_2: Hosts will obtain more experience utility than guests at group consumption events.

H_3: Hosts will underestimate the the enjoyment they will obtain from group experiences such that hosts' predicted enjoyment will be lower than their actual enjoyment.

H_3: The differences in enjoyment between the two social roles can be explained by:

a) *Event customization and creation of a self-defining experience*

b) *Pride and accomplishment*

c) *Connection to others*

d) *Engagement (flow)*

e) *Resolution of cognitive dissonance*

Understanding the mechanism by which the event role drives enjoyment is both theoretically and practically important. Theoretically, determining the underlying mechanism will provide greater insight into the aspects of hosting that generate greater consumer utility. While conceptually hosts and guests differ on a number of characteristics, it is important to understand which differences affect their behavior and experiences? Practically, if we can understand what increases hosts' actual (vs. predicted) enjoyment, we would be able to design interventions that prompt consumers to consider hosting, thus building their store of meaningful life experiences. We test these hypotheses in several studies, discussed next.

2.3 PILOT STUDY 1: CHRISTMAS

In order to test whether hosts enjoy an event more than guests in a real group consumption experience, we surveyed participants on Monday, December 28, 2015, right after the Christmas celebrations. The goal of this study was to compare the experiences and resource investments of participants who hosted an event vs. those who did not host.

2.3.1 Method

Participants and Design. One hundred and fifty-eight Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers completed the study (M_{age} = 35.13, range 21-68, 56% female) for a small payment. Everyone passed the attention check and is included in the analysis. Fifty participants indicated that they hosted a Christmas dinner or a party during the specified period.

Measures. First, we asked participants to recall their experience of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the Christmas holiday (23-27 December) as a whole. Specifically, we asked them to think about the people they spent these days with, the meals they had, the food they prepared and the gifts they gave to others and received. Next, we measured our dependent variable by capturing the extent to which they liked, enjoyed, and had fun this Christmas (α = .98) on a scale of 0 = not at all to 100 = extremely. In order to measure the resources invested in the holiday celebration, we asked participants to estimate the number of hours that they spent doing work related to the holiday (e.g., cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc.) and the amount of money that their household spent on Christmas-related expenses. Next, we measured the extent to which they felt responsible for the Christmas celebration this year (1= not at all responsible, 4

= shared equal responsibility with others, 7 = entirely responsible). Finally, participants provided demographics data.

2.3.2 Analysis and Results

Enjoyment. In support of hypothesis 2, participants who hosted an event during Christmas indicated greater enjoyment of the holiday (M = 78.43) compared to those who did not host (M = 64.65, F(1, 156) = 7.99, p = .005).

Effort and Monetary Investments. We excluded 4 outliers who reported working more hours than three standard deviations above the mean. As expected, the results indicated that hosts worked more hours during the holiday period (M = 13.45) than non-hosts (M = 7.01, F(1, 152) = 28.54, p < .001). Next, we excluded 5 outliers who reported spending more money than three standard deviations above the mean. The results showed that hosts spent almost twice as much money on the holiday (M = $1,010.24) as non-hosts ($M$ = $691.13). Note that the grand mean of the sample (M = $792.00) is very close to Gallup's 2015 Christmas spending average of $830 (Gallup 2015), suggesting that our sample is comparable to the US average.

Responsibility: Finally, hosts reported having more responsibility over the celebration (M = 5.32) than non-hosts (M = 3.32, F(1, 156) = 67.80, p <.001).

2.3.3 Discussion

By capturing consumers' actual experiences of Christmas, this study provides initial support for our proposition that hosts extract greater actual enjoyment from group events than guests. Further, we provide evidence that hosts invest more effort, time, and money in the

creation and organization of the event than guests. Yet, as participants were not randomly assigned to being a host (vs. a guest) at the Christmas party, the results may be prone to self-selection bias. Specifically, it is possible that participants who hosted an event were inherently better at holding Christmas parties, and thus created a more enjoyable experience, than those who did not host. Further, a limitation of the data is that we did not explicitly asked non-hosts whether they attended a group event or not. To address these concerns, the next studies randomly assign participants to an event role. Study 1A uses a recall procedure in which participants are asked to recall an instance when they were hosts (vs. guests) of a social event. In contrast, study 1B creates a realistic experience in the lab and randomly assigns the participants in the group to one of the two roles.

2.4 STUDY 1A: EVENT RECOLLECTION

2.4.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 201 students (M_{age} = 20.24, range 18-26, 45.8% female) at a large US university completed the study as part of a 50-minute session for course credit. The study had a one-factor design (host vs. guest) with random assignment to condition.

Procedure. Participants were told that the goal of the study was to learn more about people's experiences. Those in the host (guest) condition were asked to recall and briefly describe an event that they organized alone or with someone else (attended as a guest). To facilitate recall, we provided prompt questions (e.g., "What was the event?", "What was the

occasion?", "How many people attended?", "What happened during the event?"). Hosts and guests responded to the same prompt questions.

Measures. We first captured recalled enjoyment with two items ("How much did you enjoy the event?" and "How much fun did you have at the event?", $r = .83$, $p < .001$). Next, we measured perceived importance of the event (e.g., "How memorable is this experience?", "How important is this experience for you?", and "How significant is this experience for you?", $\alpha = .87$), effort investment ("How much effort did you invest in this experience?", "How much work did you put in for this event?", $r = .74$, $p < .001$), control over one's own experience and over the experiences of the others during the event[1], and engagement ("How engaged were you in the event?" and "How involved were you in the event?", $r = .61$, $p < .001$) in a counterbalanced order. As an overall measure of resource investment, we asked participants to indicate how much they contributed to the event before and during its occurrence; the two items were highly correlated and averaged in a contribution index ($r = .91$, $p < .001$). Next, as a manipulation check, we asked participants to define their role in the recalled event (1 = I was a guest, 7 = I was a host). Finally, participants indicated the extent to which they experienced difficulty in coming up with an event and the extent to which they remembered the event well.

2.4.2 Analysis and Results

Role manipulation check. First, we note that participants assigned to the host condition reported having a role that was closer to being a host ($M = 6.21$) than those assigned to the guest condition ($M = 1.81$, $F(1, 199) = 695.71$, $p < .001$).

[1] The two variables were moderately correlated and are analyzed as separate items ($r = .31$, $p = <.001$).

Enjoyment and involvement[2]. The analysis indicated that hosting an event brought participants greater pleasure (M = 5.70) than attending as a guest (M = 5.18, F(1, 199) = 8.34, p = .004). Further, hosts reported higher involvement (M = 5.84) compared to guests (M = 4.66, F(1, 199) = 55.75, p < .001).

Resource investments. Effort and contribution investments were correlated (r = .67, p <. 001) and hence, the two variables were analyzed with Multivariate Analysis of Variance. The results indicated that the effect of condition was significant (Pillai's Trace = .65, F(2, 198) = 187.02, p < .001). Univariate results showed that, as anticipated, being a host at an event was associated with higher exertion of effort (M = 4.65) compared to being a guest (M = 3.08, F(1, 199) = 59.27, p < .001). Furthermore, hosts reported contributing to a greater extent to the event (M = 5.32) compared to guests (M = 1.75, F(1, 199) = 365.66, p < .001).

Control. While there was no difference in perceived control over one's own experience during the event (M_{host} = 5.37 vs. M_{guest} = 5.21, F < 1), hosts indicated having more control over the experiences of others (M_{host} = 4.41 vs. M_{guest} = 2.65, F(1, 199) = 64.06, p < .001).

Recall difficulty and confidence. Interestingly, guests reported experiencing higher difficulty to come up with an event (M = 2.82) compared to hosts (M = 2.34, F(1, 199) = 4.38, p = .038). This result suggests that hosting an event may remain more accessible in participant's minds and could be easier to recall. However, event role did not predict how well participants remembered the experience (M_{host} = 5.49 vs. M_{guest} = 5.50, F < 1).

[2] The two variables were moderately correlated (r = .41, p <.001) and were analyzed separately.

2.4.3 Discussion

By applying a commonly used method of sampling experiences (e.g., Caprariello and Reis 2013), this study provides additional evidence that one's role in an event impacts the enjoyment one extracts from it. Further, the results demonstrate that hosts make greater resource investments and contributions to the event, have greater influence over the outcomes of others, and report greater involvement in the experience compared to guests. Interestingly, we find that guests experienced greater difficulty coming up with an event to report. One may argue that this difficulty (disfluency) may have decreased the recalled enjoyment associated with the experience. However, the effect of condition on enjoyment remains significant (M_{host} = 5.68 vs. M_{guest} = 5.19, F(1, 198) = 7.10, p = .008), even after controlling for difficulty (F(1, 198) = 1.81, p = .18).

Despite the random assignment to the host/guest conditions, the results may still suffer from self-selection bias. For example, it is possible that people choose to host events that they consider inherently enjoyable, while they attend events as guests when they anticipate lower enjoyment or have lower interest in the event. Hence, hosts may report greater enjoyment because they engage in objectively more enjoyable events compared to guests. In the future, a follow-up analysis of the description that participants provided during the recall task may help illuminate this question. For example, research assistants can read each description (blind to the participant's condition), and rate the extent to which the described event is successful, fun, and special. The next study aims to address the self-selection concern by keeping the type of event constant and only manipulating the distribution of effort and responsibility between conditions.

2.5 STUDY 1B: CAPTIONS STUDY

2.5.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 126 students at a large US university (M_{age} = 20.18, range 18-25, 46.8% female) completed the study as part of a larger experimental session for course credit and were randomly assigned to the role of host vs. guest in a dyad group.

Procedure. Participants were informed that, together with another student in the lab, they would complete an enjoyable activity which involved coming up with a funny title for several funny animal images. Those assigned to the role of host were asked to 1) select 4 pictures from a set of 12 and 2) choose and pick up snacks (fruit snacks vs. veggie chips) for themselves and their guest from the research assistants. Next, each dyad completed the task while consuming the snacks and the host recorded the captions. The participants were instructed to continue the rest of the survey on their individual computer stations where they responded to the dependent variable and a number of covariates.

Measures. Enjoyment of the activity was captured with three items ("How much did you enjoy this activity?", "How much fun did you have during the activity?" scored from 0 = not at all to 100 = a lot, and "If you were asked to complete this activity alone, would you have had more or less fun?" scored on a scale from 1 = definitely less fun to 7 = definitely more fun, reverse-scored). As these variables were measured on different scales, we z-scored them to create an enjoyment index (α = .78). Next, we measured how much work participants invested in the task (r = .70, p < .001), how much control they felt they had over the experience, and the extent to which they felt responsible for the activity going well. We also collected several exploratory measures (e.g., the extent to which the participant liked the snack they received,

enjoyed doing creative tasks, etc.) but these items did not provide any additional insight and are not discussed further. Finally, given that the experiment involved intensive socializing, we measured trait social anxiety (e.g., "I usually feel uncomfortable when I am in a group of people I don't know"; Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman 1991) as a covariate and coded for the gender composition (same gender or mixed gender) of the dyad.

2.5.2 Analysis and Results

Enjoyment. As the observations are nested within each dyad and the distribution of the dependent variable is normal, we conducted a hierarchical linear model with a random intercept, role condition, gender composition, and their interaction, controlling for social anxiety. The results indicated a significant main effect of social anxiety scale ($F(1, 60) = 7.55$, $p = .008$) - the more anxious participants were, the less likely they were to enjoy the activity ($\beta = -.24$, $SE = .09$). Importantly, controlling for social anxiety, there was a significant role x gender composition interaction ($F(1, 60) = 9.10$, $p = .004$). In the same-gender condition, hosts reported higher enjoyment of the activity compared to guests ($M_{host} = .19$ vs. $M_{guest} = -.14$, $F(1, 60) = 3.97$, $p = .051$). In the mixed-gender condition, the results reversed and guests reported enjoying the experience more ($M_{host} = -.18$ vs. $M_{guest} = .23$, $F(1, 60) = 5.15$, $p = .03$; see Figure 5).

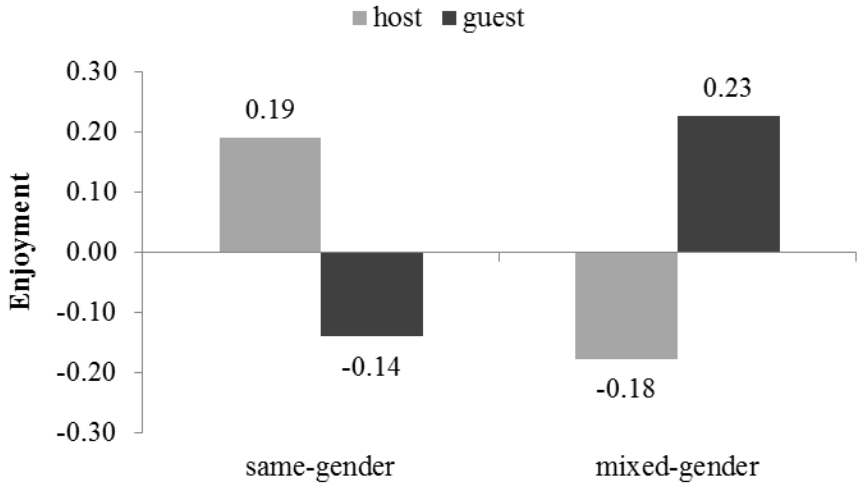


Figure 5: Event Role by Gender Composition on Task Enjoyment

Control and Effort. The results indicated that hosts perceived having more control (M = 5.09) compared to guests (M = 4.49, F(1, 60) = 7.91, p = .007), controlling for social anxiety (F < 1), gender composition of the dyad (F(1, 60) = 2.09, p = .15), and its interaction with event role (F(1, 60) = 1.84, p = .18). Interestingly, the effect of role condition on exerted effort was not significant (F(1, 121) = 1.92, p = .17). The effect of gender composition of the group on effort was, however, significant (F(1, 121) = 3.18, p = .08) such that participants in the mixed gender condition reported putting in more effort (M = 44.03) than those in the same-gender condition (M = 37.48), controlling for social anxiety (F < 1). The interaction of role by gender composition was not significant (F < 1). The results suggest that perhaps in the mixed-gender condition participants had to exert more effort to come up with an acceptable answer to each picture.

2.5.3 Discussion

In this study, we demonstrate that in same-gender pairs hosts report higher enjoyment of a leisure activity compared to guests. Interestingly, the pattern of results reverses in the mixed gender

condition. We speculate that mixed pairs may make self-presentation concerns more salient which in turn could decrease the experienced enjoyment for hosts who are in charge of the event. Admittedly, additional research in needed to understand better these findings. Specifically, future research could explore to what extent the size of the group (dyad vs. larger groups) impacts the results. In the rest of the paper, we focus on events that involve larger groups. 0The next study used a prediction-experience paradigm to test whether the proposed miscalibration between anticipated and experienced enjoyment emerges (hypotheses 1-3), and whether it is specific to individuals who invest greater resources in a group consumption experience. To create a realistic experience of a group event scenario for the experiencers, in this study we provide detailed description of the situation and illustrate it with pictures.

2.6 STUDY 2: MISPREDICTIONS

2.6.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 556 Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment. Seventeen participants did not pass one of the two attention checks and were excluded from analysis. We note that the main results hold regardless of whether these participants are included in the analysis or not. The cleaned sample consists of 539 participants (M_{age} = 34.05, range 18-78, 45% female).

Procedure. The study used a 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (experience: anticipated vs. actual) between-subjects design with random assignment. Hosts imagined that they have won a Mr. Beer "brew your own beer" kit and have decided to organize a beer tasting pot-luck party. Guests

imagined that a friend has won the beer kit and has invited them to the party as guests (see full instructions in Section 1.01(a)(i)Appendix A). Participants in the anticipated condition proceeded to the dependent measures. Participants in the actual experience condition imagined each step of the party: hosts imagined preparing the beer (from cleaning the containers to adding the beer flavors and labelling the bottles). Then, both guests and hosts imagined the party atmosphere. To increase the realism of the scenario, we showed participants pictures of the snacks, the beer bottles, and silhouettes of the participants at the party and asked them to imagine the atmosphere as though it is taking place right now.

Measures. We captured anticipated (actual) enjoyment of the experience with 3 items (example: "How much fun will (did) you have at the party?," α = .99) and willingness to remember the experience ("How likely are you to capture this experience by taking pictures?" and "To what extent will you try to preserve your memories of this event?," r = .72, p <.001). Next, we measured perceived flow of the experience (example item: "I felt completely involved in the event," α = .81), control over the event ("To what extent did you feel in control of this experience?") and invested effort ("To what extent did you feel like you put in a lot of work for this party?"). To ensure that hosts' enjoyment is not driven by their ability to imagine the event more vividly and concretely compared to guests, we measured construal level ("How vividly did you imagine the party?" and "How concretely did you imagine party?," r = .83, p <.001). Finally, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they consider preparing beer from a home brewing kit to be effortful and fun. We also collected data about participants' enjoyment of beer and familiarity with Mr. Beer's products (results are available upon request).

2.6.2 Analysis and Results

Enjoyment. A 2-way ANOVA with event role and experience conditions indicated a main effect of experience condition (F(1, 535) = 18.62, p<.001) such that participants reported higher experienced (*M* = 6.02) than anticipated (*M* = 5.62) enjoyment. Importantly, this effect was qualified by a significant interaction (F(2, 535) = 13.62, p < .001, see). Planned contrasts indicated that in the anticipated condition, guests predicted higher enjoyment of the event (*M* = 5.78) compared to hosts (*M* = 5.46, F (1, 535) = 6.17, *p* = .01). The pattern in the experience condition, however, reversed: hosts reported higher enjoyment (*M* = 6.20) than guests (*M* = 5.84, F(1, 535) = 7.47, *p* = .006). Further, hosts reported lower anticipated (*M* = 5.46) than experienced enjoyment (*M* = 6.20, F(1, 535) = 31.86, *p* <.001), while for guests there was no difference in the anticipated (*M* = 5.78) vs. predicted enjoyment (*M* = 5.84, *F* < 1). The main effect of event role was not significant (*F* < 1).

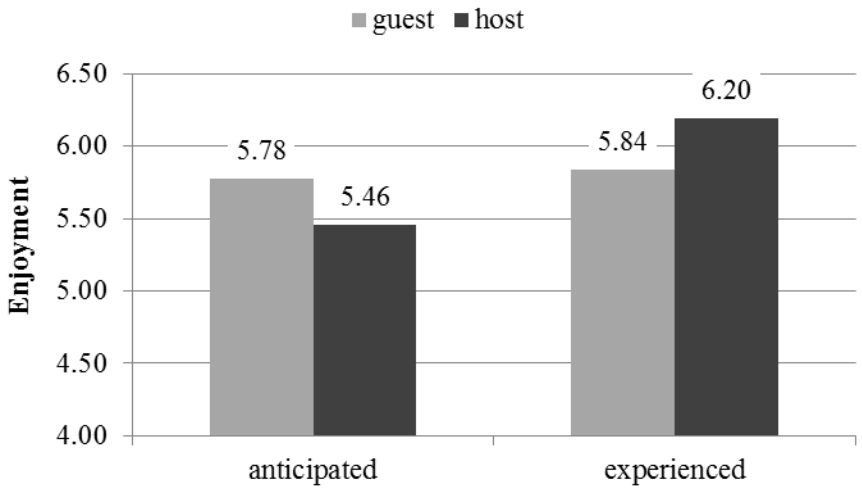


Figure 6: Party Role by Experience Condition on Party Enjoyment

Flow. The results indicated a main effect of role (F (1, 535) = 90.39, *p* <.001) and experience (F(1, 535) = 16.45, *p* <.001) but no interaction (*F* < 1). Hosts reported higher flow (*M*

= 5.54) than guests (M = 4.82) and participants who imagined experiencing the party reported greater flow (M = 5.33) than those who anticipated experiencing it (M = 5.03).

Next, we tested whether flow mediated the effect of event role on enjoyment for experiencers and predictors separately, using bootstrapping (Hayes 2012; Model 4). In the mediation model, we also included control and effort to test for alternative mediators. The results indicated that flow was the only significant mediator (indirect effect for flow = .51, SE = .09, 95% CI: .35 to .71; indirect effect of control = .06, SE = .08, 95% CI: -.09 to .24; indirect effect of effort = -.07, SE = .13, 95% CI: -.32 to .18; direct effect of role = -0.15, SE = .13, p = .26). Flow was the only significant mediation in the predictors condition as well (indirect effect for flow = .59, SE = .11, 95% CI: .39 to .83; indirect effect of control = .17, SE = .15, 95% CI: -.11 to .48; indirect effect of effort = -.22, SE = .15, 95% CI: -.52 to .06; direct effect of role = -.87, SE = .18, p <.001). Note that while flow was a significant mediator for both experiencers and predictors, the fact that the direct effect remained significant in the latter case suggests that there may be another mediator that can further explain the effect of event role on anticipated enjoyment.

Control and Effort. As the two measures were correlated (r = .73, p <.001), we used MANOVA. The results indicated a main effect of role (Pillai's Trace = .62, F(2, 534) = 430.48, p <.001) and main effect of experience (Pillai's Trace = .02, F(2, 534) = 5.42, p =.005), which were qualified by an interaction (Pillai's Trace = .01, F(2, 534) = 3.45, p =.03).

Univariate results indicated a marginal interaction of role by experience on effort (F(2, 535) = 3.97, p = .09). Post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni adjustment revealed that guests reported lower effort in the experience condition (M = 2.70) than in the anticipated condition (M = 3.08, F(1, 535) = 5.69, p = .02); there was no difference for hosts ($M_{\text{anticipated}}$ = 6.21, $M_{\text{experienced}}$ = 6.22,

F < 1). There was a main effect of role (F(1, 535) = 847.25, *p* <.001) such that hosts reported higher effort (*M* = 6.22) than guests (*M* = 2.89). There was also a marginal effect of experience condition (F(1, 535) = 2.69, *p* =.10) such that participants reported lower effort in the experienced (*M* = 4.46) than in the anticipated condition (*M* = 4.65).

Hosts reported higher control over the event (*M* = 5.78) than guests (*M* = 3.62, F(1, 535) = 329.54, *p* <.001). Participants reported marginally lower control in the anticipated (*M* = 4.60) than in the experienced condition (*M* = 4.80, F(1, 535) = 2.66, *p* =.10).

Construal level. There was only a main effect of experience condition (F(1, 535) = 6.90, *p* =.009): participants in the anticipated condition reported lower vividness of the event (*M* = 5.53) than participants in the experience condition (*M* = 5.77). Importantly, the detail and vividness with which participants imagined the event did not differ between hosts and guests or across conditions (*F*'s < 1).

2.6.3 Discussion

Study 2 provides support for hypotheses 1-3: host underestimate how much they would enjoy an event; further, hosts anticipate that they will experience lower enjoyment than guests but, once the group event is over, hosts report higher experiential utility from the event than guests. This study also provides partial support for the underlying mechanism (hypothesis 3). We find that, while hosts have greater control over the event and report exerting more effort, it is the greater engagement during the event that boosts hosts' enjoyment.

The next study aims to rule out the alternative explanation that hosts' enjoyment is driven by cognitive dissonance rather than actual experiential utility. We expect that if cognitive dissonance drives the results, then hosts would enjoy an event more than guests, regardless of

how objectively enjoyable the event is. Thus, a main effect of event role on enjoyment would suggest that, at least partly, hosts' desire to decrease cognitive dissonance explains their affective experiences. In this study we use a different product domain to increase the generalizability of our results.

2.7 STUDY 3: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

2.7.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 515 Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment. Twenty-two participants did not pass one of the two attention checks and were excluded from analysis. The cleaned sample consists of 493 participants (M_{age} = 33.46, range 18-72, 49.7% female).

Procedure. The study used a 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (outcome: good vs. bad) between-subjects design with random assignment. Hosts (guests) imagined that they (a friend) had purchased the board game "Ticket to Ride" and decided to organize a game night party and provide some snacks and drinks. Next, participants imagined that the game night party had begun and received information about the game. A detailed description of what playing the game feels like followed and hosts were reminded that they must keep track of the party and make sure there is enough food and drinks. Next, we manipulated the outcome of the party: those in the bad outcome condition read that, after surveying the room, they notice that the conversation is not going smoothly, that there is not enough space and food for everyone to feel comfortable, and that people seem bored and anxious to leave; those in the good outcome condition read that the

party is going well, everyone is comfortable and enjoying themselves. Finally, participants imagined that the party is coming to an end – those in the bad (good) outcome condition read that "People are not quite impressed with the game and are in a hurry to leave" ("Everyone is quite impressed with the party and the game. As people leave, everyone agrees that there should be a similar game night soon!").

Measures. We captured enjoyment of the experience with the same scale as in study 1 (α = .98), followed by likelihood to take pictures during the party and talk about it on social media. Next, we captured the extent to which participants attributed the outcome of the party to themselves, the other participants, and the game. We captured the extent to which participants perceived the party to be a success (1 = a complete failure to 7 = a complete success); as this item was very highly correlated with enjoyment (r = .92, p <.001) and conceptually similar, we created an enjoyment index scale (α = .98). Next, we measured the amount of effort, time, and money that participants thought they invested in the party (1 = not at all, 7 = a lot). These items were highly correlated and averaged in a resource investments index (α = .87). Finally, we measured construal level with the same items from study 2 (r = .81, p <.001) and collected data about the extent to which respondents enjoy playing board games in general and are familiar with "Ticket to Ride" (results are available from the authors).

2.7.2 Analysis and Results

Enjoyment. A two-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of outcome (F(1, 489) = 1485.03, p <.001), qualified by a significant role by outcome interaction (F(1, 489) = 12.99, p <.001; see Figure 7). Planned contrasts indicated that in the good outcome condition, hosts reported marginally higher enjoyment (M = 6.26) than guests (M = 6.06, F(1, 489) = 3.20, p =

.07); in the bad outcome condition, the pattern reversed such that hosts reported lower enjoyment (M = 2.81) than guests (M = 3.20, F(1, 489) = 10.87, p = .001). These results suggest that the increased enjoyment of hosts in the positive outcome condition was not due to the amount of resources invested in the event.

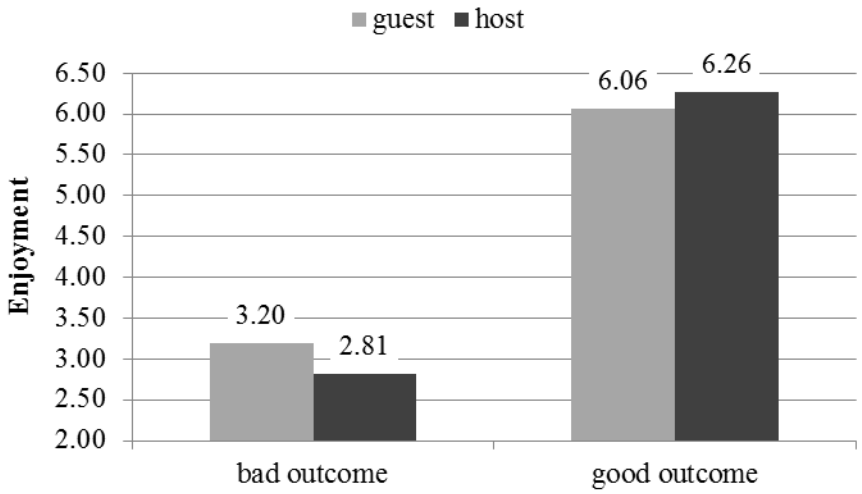


Figure 7: Even Role by Outcome on Event Enjoyment

Resource Investments. There was a main effect of event role (F(1, 489) = 759.79, p <.001) and outcome (F(1, 489) = 4.42, p = .04), but no interaction (F < 1). As expected, hosts reported investing more resources (M = 5.05) than guests (M = 2.51) and participants in the good outcome condition reported investing more resources (M = 3.88) than those in the bad outcome condition (M = 3.69). These results suggest that, regardless of the outcome condition, hosts invested more resources than guests. Thus, we can rule out the alternative explanation that in the bad outcome condition hosts engaged in motivated reasoning and believed that they had invested fewer resources in the event.

Construal level. There was only a main effect of outcome condition (F(1, 489) = 13.45, p < .001): participants in the bad outcome condition reported lower vividness of the event (M =

5.70) than participants in the experience condition (M = 6.03). Importantly, the main effect of event role (F(1, 489) = 1.13, p = .29) and the interaction term (F < 1) were not significant.

2.7.3 Discussion

In summary, this study replicated the finding that hosts experience greater enjoyment than guests and demonstrated that this difference is observed only when the outcome of the event is positive. This further suggests that the heightened enjoyment is not driven by cognitive dissonance and provides an important boundary effect. Given our findings that guests experience lower event enjoyment due to their lower involvement, in the next study we propose and test one way to increase guests' enjoyment.

2.8 STUDY 4: INCREASING GUESTS' ENJOYMENT

2.8.1 Method

Participants and Design. A total of 368 Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment. Twelve participants did not pass one of the two attention checks and were excluded from analysis. We note that the main results hold regardless of whether these participants are included in the analysis or not. The cleaned sample consists of 356 participants (M_{age} = 35.36, range 18-78, 58% female).

Procedure. The study used a 2 (role: host, guest) x 2 (flow: control vs. flow) between-subjects design with random assignment. Hosts (guests) imagined that they had received (a

friend had received) the board game "Ticket to Ride" and decided to organize a game night party. Participants imagined that the game night party had begun and received information about the game. Those in the control condition were told that the game is complex and confusing at time and while they are paying attention, they are not completely focused on playing the game. Participants in the flow condition were told that the game is challenging, stimulating and absorbing. Finally, all participants were told that they performed well at the game and the party was a success.

Measures. We captured enjoyment of the experience with the same scale as in Study 1 (α = .95). Next, we measured likelihood to recommend the board game to others and likelihood to purchase the game as a gift for someone else. The two variables were highly correlated (r = .83, p <.001) and were averaged in a recommendation intentions index. Next, we measured perceived flow of the experience (example item: "I felt completely immersed in the experience," α = .85), perceived fluency (example item: "I experienced a sense of simplicity", α = .83), self-relevance of the event (example item: "This experience was very close to my sense of self", α = .92), and connectedness to the rest of the group (example item: "This experience made me feel connected to others," α = .94). The display order of these scales was counterbalanced. We also measured perceived control over the event (e.g., "To what extent did you feel in control of this experience?", r = .77, p <.001) and invested effort (e.g., "To what extent did you feel like you put in a lot of work for this party?", r = .88, p <.001; counterbalanced order). Finally, we measured construal level (e.g., "How vividly did you imagine the party?", r = .83, p <.001) and asked participants to indicate the extent to which they thought that playing the game required effort. We also collected data about participants' enjoyment of board games and familiarity with "Ticket to Ride" (results are available upon request).

2.8.2 Analysis and Results

Enjoyment. There was a main effect of event role such that hosts reported greater enjoyment (*M* = 5.92) than guests (*M* = 5.65; F(1, 352) = 6.48, *p* = .01). There was also a main effect of flow condition – participants in the flow condition reported greater enjoyment (*M* = 6.12) than those in the control condition (*M* = 5.44, F(1, 352) = 42.47, *p* <.001). Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction (F(1, 352) = 5.39, *p* = .02). Planned contrasts indicated that hosts reported higher enjoyment than guests in the control condition (M_{host} = 5.70, M_{guest} = 5.19, F(1, 352) = 11.84, *p* = .001) but the difference between the two roles disappeared in the flow condition (M_{host} = 6.13, M_{guest} = 6.11, *F<1*, see Figure 8).

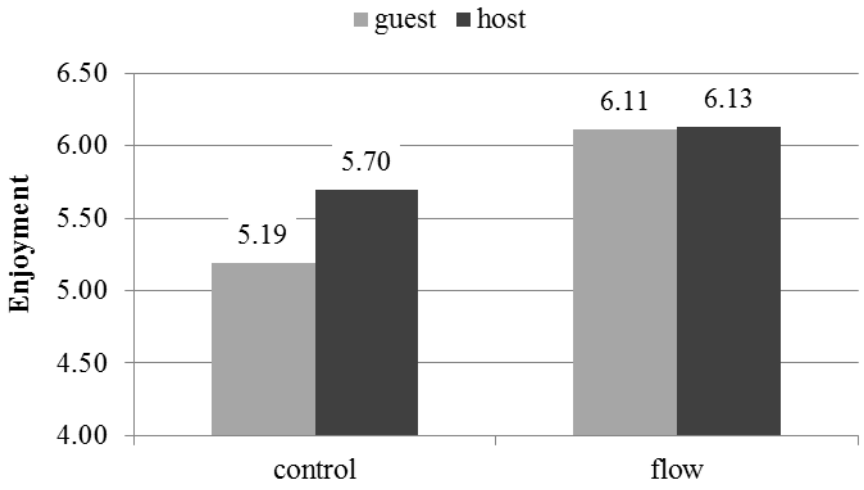


Figure 8: Event Role by Flow Condition on Event Enjoyment

Recommendation intentions. There was a main effect of event role such that hosts reported higher recommendation intentions (*M* = 5.43) than guests (*M* = 4.90; F(1, 352) = 13.16, *p* < .001). There was also a main effect of flow condition – participants in the flow condition reported higher recommendation intentions (*M* = 5.68) than those in the control condition (*M* = 4.65, F(1, 352) = 48.54, *p* <.001). Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant

interaction (F(1, 352) = 5.01, p = .03). Planned contrasts indicated that hosts reported higher recommendation intentions than guests in the control condition (M_{host} = 5.08, M_{guest} = 4.22, F(1, 352) = 17.21, p < .001) but the difference between the two roles was attenuated in the flow condition (M_{host} = 5.78, M_{guest} = 5.57, *F<1*, see Figure 9).

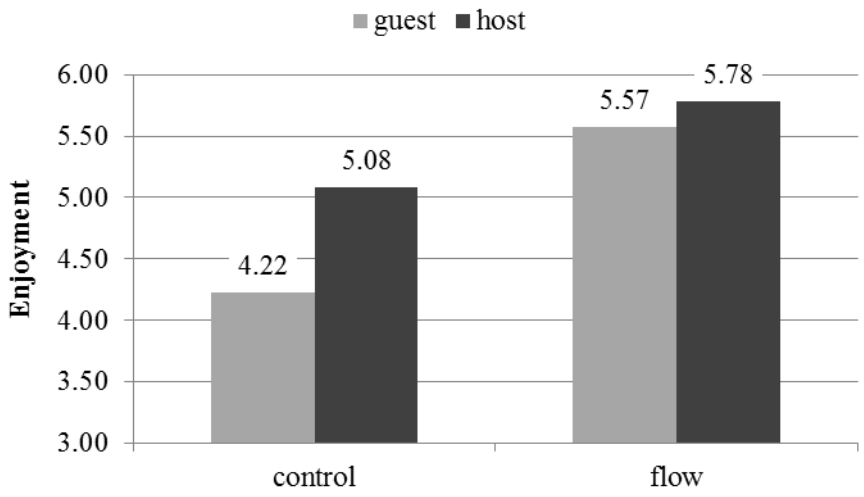


Figure 9: Event Role by Flow on Recommendation Intentions

Flow. The manipulation of flow was successful – participants in the flow condition experienced greater flow (M = 5.77) than those in the control condition (M = 4.49, F(1, 352) = 139.20, p <.001). There was also a main effect of event role such that hosts experienced greater flow (M = 5.29) than guests (M = 4.96; F(1, 352) = 9.16, p =.003). Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction (F(1, 352) = 9.49, p =.002). Planned contrasts indicated that hosts experienced greater flow than guests in the control condition (M_{host} = 4.82, M_{guest} = 4.16, F(1, 352) = 19.48, p < .001) but the difference in experienced flow between the two roles was no longer significant in the flow condition (M_{host} = 5.76, M_{guest} = 5.77, *F<1*).

Fluency. There was a main effect of event role (M_{host} = 4.40, M_{guest} = 3.86, F(1, 352) = 13.64, p < .001) and flow condition ($M_{control}$ = 3.70, M_{flow} = 4.56, F(1, 352) = 35.77, p < .001) but no interaction (*F<1*).

Self-relevance. There was a main effect of event role such that hosts reported greater self-relevance of the event (M = 4.65) than guests (M = 4.19; F(1, 352) = 9.18, p = .003). There was also a main effect of flow condition – participants in the flow condition reported higher self-relevance (M = 4.69) than those in the control condition (M = 4.15, F(1, 352) = 12.64, p <.001). These effects were qualified by a significant interaction (F(1, 352) = 3.82, p = .05). Planned contrasts indicated that the event was more self-relevant for hosts than guests in the control condition (M_{host} = 4.53, M_{guest} = 3.77, F(1, 352) = 12.42, p < .001) but the difference between the two roles was attenuated in the flow condition (M_{host} = 4.77, M_{guest} = 4.61, F<1).

Connectedness. There was a main effect of event role such that hosts reported greater connectedness to others (M = 5.68) than guests (M = 5.32; F(1, 352) = 7.54, p = .006). There was also a main effect of flow condition – participants in the flow condition reported higher connectedness (M = 5.68) than those in the control condition (M = 5.32, F(1, 352) = 7.88, p =.005). These effects were qualified by a significant interaction (F(1, 352) = 8.37, p = .004). Planned contrasts indicated that the event was more self-relevant for hosts than guests in the control condition (M_{host} = 4.53, M_{guest} = 3.77, F(1, 352) = 12.42, p < .001) but the difference between the two roles was attenuated in the flow condition (M_{host} = 4.77, M_{guest} = 4.61, F<1).

Control and Effort. As the two variables were correlated (r = .65, p <.001), we first conducted MANOVA. The results indicated a main effect of hosting condition (Pillai's Trace = .73, F(2, 351) = 475.65, p <.001) and an interaction (Pillai's Trace = .04, F(2, 351) = 6.57, p =.002). The main effect of flow condition was not significant (Pillai's Trace = .005, F<1). Univariate analysis showed that hosts reported greater control (M = 6.10) compared to guests (M = 2.66, F(1, 352) = 794.79, p < .001) and that hosts imagined doing more work (M = 5.33) than guests (M = 3.01, F(1, 352) = 308.59, p < .001). Guests reported greater control in the flow

condition (M = 2.90) than in the control condition (M = 2.42, F(1, 352) = 7.71, p = 0.01) and greater effort in the flow condition (M = 3.22) than in the control condition (M = 2.80, F(1, 352) = 4.86, p = 0.03). The differences in effort and control for hosts were not significant (F (2, 351) = 2.09, p = .13).

Construal level. There was a main effect of event role such that hosts imagined more vividly the event (M = 5.91) than guests (M = 5.68, F(1, 352) = 5.03, p = .03). There was also a main effect of flow condition such that participants in the flow condition imagined the event more vividly (M = 5.95) than participants in the control condition (M = 5.64, F(1, 351) = 8.70, p = .003). The interaction was not significant (F<1).

2.8.3 Discussion

In sum, this study replicated the finding that hosts experience greater enjoyment than guests in the control condition and demonstrated that guests' enjoyment may be increased by stimulating greater engagement in the event. This finding is important for marketers as it suggests that products consumed during group experiences (e.g., board games, movies, etc.) would lead to greater experiential utility as long as all participants feel engaged in the experience.

2.9 GENERAL DISCUSSION

According to data from the American Time Use Survey (2014), the number of people who have attended or hosted weekend/holiday social events has decreased by 32% in the last decade. Given the implications for the economy (e.g., sales of goods and services associated with

the experience) and consumer well-being (e.g., opportunities to build meaningful life experiences) of group consumption events, consumers' decreased engagement in such experiences presents a problem to marketers and consumers. Our research provides some insight into why both hosts and guests may be decreasing their participation in such experiences. We demonstrate that hosts anticipate a great deal of work and underestimate the experiential utility of the event. Guests, on the other hand, expect that the lower stress and work responsibilities will allow them to enjoy the experience more, thus overestimating their predicted enjoyment compared to hosts. Our findings contribute to the body of research which shows that consumers are not always aware of what is best for them (Hsee et al 2010; Benartzi and Thaler 2004; Hsee, Hastie, & Chen 2008; Thaler and Sunstein 2008; Botti and Iyengar 2006).

Further, it is likely that the mismatch between consumers' predicted and actual experiences of group events may make consumers less willing to host and participate as guests in such events. To provide direct evidence for this proposition, we asked Amazon Mechanical Turk participants (N=92, M_{age} = 33.37, 35% female) whether they would prefer to host an event in general (1 = definitely prefer to be a guest, 7 = definitely prefer to be a host). Only 14% indicated that they will be interested in hosting a group event (answers 5-7), suggesting that one of the reasons why consumers engage in fewer group experiences may be that fewer people are willing to create such experiences.

This paper extends the literature on social influence in several important ways. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to examine consumers' satisfaction with joint experiences which involve asymmetric contributions. We conceptualize the social role of a host (vs. a guest) in consumption experiences and differentiate it from the related construct of a manager or leader in the organizational literature. Second, unlike most of the literature which has focused on one

focal consumer or a dyad, we focus on groups which involve more than two participants. Third, we study the experience of all participants engaged in the consumption event, thus providing a multidimensional picture of the consumption phenomenon.

Besides its theoretical contributions, this paper has important implications for practitioners. By understanding consumers' expectations and experiences of group consumption events, companies can create interventions to motivate more consumers to host group consumption events and to stimulate greater enjoyment of such events by all parties involved. The increased incidence of and participation in such joint experiences will create significant economic and social benefits through the consumption of party-related products and services and through the increased meaningfulness and social value extracted from the event. Last but not least, this work elucidates consumers' preferences to share resources with others, thus proposing ways to ensure the sustainability of collaborative systems such as AirBnB, EatWith, MealSharing, and Meetup. By understanding what motivates consumers to invest asymmetrically more resources in an experience or a service, we can find new ways to grow the shared economy.

This paper suggests several fruitful avenues for future research. First, in this work we treated consumers' roles at group events as strictly categorical – participants were either hosts or guests. Yet, being a host vs. a guest can be represented by a continuum, depending on the extent to which participants contribute to the experience. Some guests may arrive earlier to help the host or bring a dish, thus taking up some of the responsibilities of the host. On the other hand, hosts may decrease their work (and control) over the event by hiring a catering company to provide the food, or by having the event in a restaurant. Future research can explore the dynamic nature of resource contribution and social roles in the enjoyment of group consumption

experiences. Our theoretical framework suggests that involving guests in the experience through higher resource investments would increase their enjoyment.

Relatedly, future research can explore whether the nature of contributions to the event impacts the enjoyment extracted from it. For example, will hosts who invest more effort and time extract more happiness compared to those who invest more money in the event? Past literature is equivocal: on the one hand, investing more effort may make time focus salient, which may lead to greater willingness to connect to others and may ultimately bring more happiness (Mogilner 2010); on the other hand, spending money on others leads to increased feelings of social connectedness and competence (Dunn, Aknin, and Norton 2008; 2014).

Next, it is interesting to consider the extent to which characteristics of the social event can moderate consumers' enjoyment. For example, does the number of participants at the event (3-4 vs. 15-20 vs. 100-120) impact the effect of social roles on experiential utility? Do unique (21st birthday) vs. regular events (Christmas) bring different anticipated and experienced enjoyment for hosts and guests? And does the proportion of number of hosts vs. guests at the group event matter? Further, what individual differences determine people's propensity to host events? For example, consumers high in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and desire for control may be more likely to opt into being hosts.

Last but not least, it will be important to understand the extent to which consumers learn from past hosting experiences. For example, if people host an enjoyable event, are they more likely host another event in the future? Our intuition suggests that consumers engage in some belief updating but as long as they focus on the work associated with the organization and management of the experience, they may underestimate the enjoyment they would obtain.

APPENDIX A

STUDY 2 MATERIALS

Imagine the following:

Recently, you [a friend of yours] purchased a **"Tickets to Ride"** board game.

The game, pictured below, is a best-seller on Amazon (4.8 out of 5 stars, over 2,800 reviews) and is one of the most enjoyable games in the category.

You and your friends are thinking about organizing a game night - you will get together, play the game, and have some snacks and drinks.

You have decided to organize and host this game night. You will provide some snacks and drinks and will be responsible for coordinating the event and explaining the game. [Your friend has decided to organize and host this game night. The host will provide some snacks and drinks and will be responsible for coordinating the event and explaining the game.]

Thus, you need to inform everyone about the date and time, provide the snacks and drinks, and make sure that you read the game instructions and understand the game before the party starts. [Thus, you don't need to do much to prepare for the party. All the organization and preparation will be done by your friend who is hosting.]

You will be the HOST [GUEST].

Now, imagine that the game night party has begun.

There are some tasty snacks and a wide variety of drinks.

Everyone has arrived and now you are about to start playing the game.

Close your eyes for a few seconds to imagine the atmosphere.

Now everyone has gathered around the big dining table and the game begins.

You read [The host reads] the instructions out loud:

Ticket to Ride is a cross-country train adventure game. Players collect train cards that enable them to claim railway routes connecting cities throughout North America. The longer the routes, the more points they earn.

As the game progresses, you find that it is quite complex at times. It requires very good understanding of the many rules. There are a lot of details and "tricks" that can change the outcome of the game.

You pay attention to the game, but you are not completely concentrated or focused on the game or what your fellow players are doing. You are still quite aware of your surroundings and of things unrelated to the game.

As the host, you also make sure that the party is going well and that there is enough food and drinks for everyone. [You grab a drink and a snack from time to time.]

Close your eyes and imagine how playing this game feels. Imagine your moves, the complexity that you experience, the other players, and the railroads that you build.

[GOOD OUTCOME CONDTIONS]

After a while, you survey the party and notice that conversation is flowing smoothly with no awkward moments of silence. Everyone seems interested in the game.

There is ample space and food for everyone to be comfortable.

Overall, people seem to be doing just fine and no one seems anxious to leave the party early.

You collect a lot of points and make some successful moves.

Eventually, after playing for a few hours, the party gradually comes to an end.

Everyone is quite impressed with the party and the game. As people leave, everyone agrees that there should be a similar game night soon!

Close your eyes for a second to imagine the situation and how you feel at this moment.

[BAD OUTCOME CONDTIONS]

After a while, you survey the party and notice that conversation is not flowing smoothly - there are some awkward moments of silence from time to time. No one is really interested in the game.

There is not enough space and food for everyone to be comfortable.

Overall, people seem to be a bit bored and some seem anxious to leave the party early.

You collect a lot of points and make some successful moves.

Eventually, after playing for a few hours, the party gradually comes to an end.

People are not quite impressed with the game and are in a hurry to leave.

Close your eyes for a second to imagine the situation and how you feel at this moment.

APPENDIX B

STUDY 3 MATERIALS

SCREEN 1 (ROLE MANIPULATION):

HOST:

Imagine the following:

Recently, you received a **"Tickets to Ride"** board game.

The game, pictured below, is a best-seller on Amazon (4.8 out of 5 stars, over 2,800 reviews) and is one of the most enjoyable games in the category.

You and your friends are thinking about organizing a game night - you will get together, play the game, and have some snacks and drinks.

You have decided to organize and host this game night. You will provide some snacks and drinks and will be responsible for coordinating the event and explaining the game.

Thus, you need to inform everyone about the date and time, provide the snacks and drinks, and make sure that you read the game instructions and understand the game before the party starts.

You will be the HOST.

GUEST:

Imagine the following:

Recently, a friend of yours received a **"Tickets to Ride"** board game.

The game, pictured below, is a best-seller on Amazon (4.8 out of 5 stars, over 2,800 reviews) and is one of the most enjoyable games in the category.

You and your friends are thinking about organizing a game night - you will get together, play the game, and have some snacks and drinks.

Your friend has decided to organize and host this game night. The host will provide some snacks and drinks and will be responsible for coordinating the event and explaining the game.

Thus, you don't need to do much to prepare for the party. All the organization and preparation will be done by your friend who is hosting.

You will be the GUEST.

SCREEN 2 (EVERYONE):

Now, imagine that the game night party has begun.

There are some tasty snacks and a wide variety of drinks.

Everyone has arrived and now you are about to start playing the game.

Close your eyes for a few seconds to imagine the atmosphere.

SCREEN 3:

HOST:

Now everyone has gathered around the big dining table and the game begins.

You read the instructions out loud

Ticket to Ride is a cross-country train adventure game. Players collect train cards that enable them to claim railway routes connecting cities throughout North America. The longer the routes, the more points they earn.

GUEST:

Now everyone has gathered around the big dining table and the game begins.

The host reads the instructions out loud:

Ticket to Ride is a cross-country train adventure game. Players collect train cards that enable them to claim railway routes connecting cities throughout North America. The longer the routes, the more points they earn.

SCREEN 4 (FLOW MANIPULATION):

CONTROL-HOST:

As the game progresses, you find that it is quite complex and confusing at times.

It requires very good understanding of the many rules. There are a lot of details and "tricks" that can change the outcome of the game.

You pay attention to the game, but you are not completely concentrated or focused on the game or what your fellow players are doing. You are still quite aware of your surroundings and of things unrelated to the game. You are not completely immersed in the game.

As the host, you also make sure that the party is going well and that there is enough food and drinks for everyone.

Close your eyes and imagine how playing this game feels. Imagine your moves, the confusion and complexity that you experience, the other players, and the railroads that you build.

CONTROL-GUEST:

As the game progresses, you find that it is quite complex and confusing at times.

It requires very good understanding of the many rules. There are a lot of details and "tricks" that can change the outcome of the game.

You pay attention to the game, but you are not completely concentrated or focused on the game or what your fellow players are doing. You are still quite aware of your surroundings and of things unrelated to the game. You are not completely immersed in the game.

You grab a drink and a snack from time to time.

Close your eyes and imagine how playing this game feels. Imagine your moves, the confusion and complexity that you experience, the other players, and the railroads that you build.

FLOW-HOST:

As the game progresses, you find that it is quite challenging.

It requires strategic thinking and planning. It makes you think and challenges your analytic skills.

You find that the game is really stimulating and completely absorbing.

You are completely concentrated and focused on the game, and on what your fellow players are doing. You pay attention only to the game and tune out your surroundings and everything unrelated. You are completely immersed in this experience.
As the host, you also make sure that the party is going well and that there is enough food and drinks for everyone.
Close your eyes and imagine how playing this game feels. Imagine the challenge, your moves, your concentration, the other players, and the railroads that you build.

FLOW -GUEST:
As the game progresses, you find that it is quite challenging.
It requires strategic thinking and planning. It makes you think and challenges your analytic skills.
You find that the game is really stimulating and completely absorbing.
You are completely concentrated and focused on the game, and on what your fellow players are doing. You pay attention only to the game and tune out your surroundings and everything unrelated. You are completely immersed in this experience.
You grab a drink and a snack from time to time.
Close your eyes and imagine how playing this game feels. Imagine the challenge, your moves, your concentration, the other players, and the railroads that you build.

SCREEN 4 (EVERYONE):
You collect a lot of points and make some successful moves. You are satisfied with your performance.
Eventually, after playing for a few hours, the party gradually comes to an end.
Everyone is quite impressed with the party and the game. As people leave, everyone agrees that there should be a similar game night soon!
Close your eyes for a second to imagine the situation and how you feel at this moment.

FLOW SCALE:

I felt challenged during this experience.
I felt in control of my experience.
I focused only on things related to the experience I was engaged in and tuned out everything else.

I felt completely involved in the event.

I felt emotionally engaged during this party.

I nearly lost track of time during the experience.

I felt completely immersed in the experience.

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