

Editorial Note

Research dialogue introduction

Consumer judgment and decision making has been of great interest to the field of Consumer Psychology since the field's very inception. Fundamental research established that consumers do not make choices consistent with an economic (i.e., utility maximization) perspective. Rather, individuals are influenced by the context in which decisions are made, as well as the nature of the alternatives themselves. More recent research has begun to explore the processes underlying such judgment and decision. The target paper for this Research Dialogue provides such a perspective. The paper, co-authored by Itamar Simonson, James Bettman, Thomas Kramer, and John Payne, advances a particularly novel theoretical framework by which to understand the psychological processes underlying judgment and choice. Specifically, they argue that judgment and choice tasks are best understood as comparison processes. Fundamental to such a process are two mechanisms: The extent to which the task and alternatives fall within a decision maker's Latitude of Acceptance and the relative ease (fluency) by which such comparisons are made. As such, this framework offers a potentially parsimonious and powerful lens by which to understand past and predict new judgment and decision making phenomena.

Three commentaries are provided by experts in the area of judgment and decision making. Frank Kardes suggests that the

conditions under which comparison processes operate may be limited to when the motivation and opportunity for consumers to process information are high. Under other conditions consumers are more likely to engage in selective processes, whereby a single focal alternative is judged in isolation on the basis of its own merits. Eric Johnson applauds the authors' goal of advancing a theory which hypothesizes underlying judgment and choice processes. Johnson further counsels that such process theories would be strengthened by including process measures. Hal Arkes provides an analysis of the theory by reviewing related literature and suggesting that the theory could be even more parsimonious. Simonson, Bettman, Kramer, and Payne provide a thoughtful and cogent response to the three commentaries.

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