Intern. J. of Research in Marketing 32 (2015) 435–438

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Intern. J. of Research in Marketing

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijresmar

Thinking, feeling, and giving: The effects of scope and valuation on consumer donations

Jonathan Hasford [a,*], Adam Farmer [b], Stacie F. Waites [b]

[a] Florida International University, Miami, FL 33174, United States
[b] Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS 39762, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
First received on November 14, 2014 and was under review for 3½ months
Available online 6 June 2015

Replication Editor: John G. Lynch, Jr.

Keywords:
Scope
Scope insensitivity
Emotional intelligence
Donation behavior

ABSTRACT

Through a replication and extension of Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004), we examine how scope impacts consumer donation behavior. We find that consumers are more insensitive to scope when making donations if valuations are based on emotions as opposed to calculation. We then demonstrate how a consumer's ability to understand emotional information impacts their sensitivity to scope. Specifically, the less able consumers are to understand their emotions, the more likely they are to rely on scope when donating to charity.

Published by Elsevier B.V.

1. Introduction

When promoting charitable causes to consumers, marketers often incorporate information on the scope (e.g. how many individuals are impacted) of their charitable efforts (Smith et al., 2013). However, several studies have identified that consumers can be insensitive to scope, such that one's willingness to donate is not impacted by significant increases in scope magnitude (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992). For instance, Desvousges et al. (1993) found no differences between participant donations to help save 2000, 20,000, or 200,000 birds.

Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004) demonstrated that scope is neglected when valuations are made based on feelings and emotion, whereas valuations based on calculation lead to greater scope sensitivity. This effect is based on the affective focus of the decision maker (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004), where the degree to which an individual attends to affective information impacts whether scope or emotion drives donation behavior. To extend this explanation of scope insensitivity, we examine differences in how individuals process emotional information. We expect that the valuation by feeling effect is a result of a donor's understanding of the emotions conveyed by a charity, which ultimately reduces the importance of that charity's scope. Thus, we examine how scope insensitivity is affected by a consumer's ability to understand emotional information. Understanding emotion is a dimension of emotional intelligence that involves knowing what information emotions convey and how to understand emotional problems (Kidwell, Hardesty, & Childers, 2008). Emotional understanding is also core to the processing of emotional information and cognitive reasoning (Mayer et al., 2001). When emotional understanding is high, individuals are more likely to incorporate emotions into reasoned judgments. However, when emotional understanding is low, individuals give less weight to emotional information because they do not understand and trust emotional signals (Kidwell et al., 2008). Thus, we predict that when individuals are high (vs. low) in emotional understanding, the emotions conveyed by a charity are weighted more (less) heavily in decision making and reliance on scope to guide donation behavior is reduced (increased).

The current research replicates and extends the work of Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004) in two studies. Study 1 replicates scope insensitivity effects on donation behavior by comparing differences in consumers primed to make valuations by feelings with those primed to make valuations by calculation. Here, we conceptually replicate Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004) by using new manipulations to enhance the generalizability of their findings. Then, in study 2, we advance the theory underlying scope insensitivity effects by investigating differences in understanding emotion on donation behavior.

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

Two hundred seventy-three undergraduates were randomly assigned to a 2 (valuation: calculation or feeling) × 2 (scope: 1 eagle or 4 eagles) between-subjects design. To begin, valuation was

* Corresponding author at: 345A Ryder Business Building, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33174, United States.
E-mail addresses: jhasford@fiu.edu (J. Hasford), adam.farmer@msstate.edu (A. Farmer), sef76@msstate.edu (S.F. Waites).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2015.05.006
0167-8116/Published by Elsevier B.V.

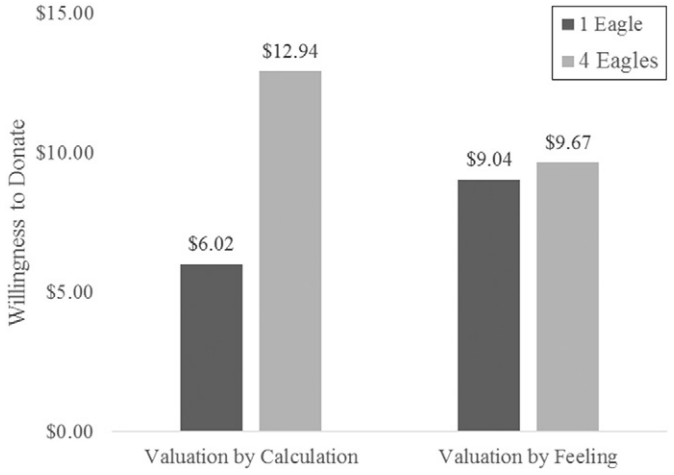

Fig. 1. Study 1 result.

manipulated with a priming task (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004; see Appendix for study materials). To prime valuation by calculation, participants solved mathematical problems. To prime valuation by feeling, participants reported their feelings toward various words. After the priming task, participants read a passage about a student-run program to save endangered bald eagles. In the passage, scope was manipulated as donations would be used to help save either 1 or 4 eagles. After reading the passage, participants provided an amount they would be willing to donate to the program. Participants could enter any dollar amount in this open-ended item.

2.2. Results

An ANOVA was conducted with valuation and scope predicting donation amount. The interaction of valuation and scope was significant ($F(1, 269) = 4.83$, $p < .05$). Results are available in Fig. 1. For the valuation by calculation condition, donations were significantly greater when 4 eagles were saved ($M = 12.94$, $SD = 18.52$) than when 1 eagle was saved ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 6.90$, $t(127) = 2.84$, $p < .01$), suggesting sensitivity to scope. For participants in the valuation by feeling condition, donations did not differ when 4 eagles were saved ($M = 9.67$, $SD = 9.21$) or 1 eagle was saved ($M = 9.04$, $SD = 10.02$, $t(142) = .39$, $p > .05$), suggesting scope insensitivity.

To synthesize our findings with the results of Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004), we performed a two-study meta-analysis comparing their study 3 results to our own (Jhang & Lynch, 2015). This allowed us to assess the significance of the effects averaged over both studies. Results are available in Table 1. When combined with the original results of Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004), our results were replicated. Specifically, participants in the valuation by calculation condition were sensitive to scope and donated more as scope increased ($Z = 3.84$, $p < .01$). However, participants in the valuation by feeling condition were insensitive to scope and did not differ in their donations ($Z = 0.72$, $p = .47$).

We also compared differences in donation by scope. For helping one animal, valuation by feeling elicited greater levels of donation ($Z = 3.04$, $p < .01$). However, for helping four animals, valuation by calculation elicited directionally greater levels of donation, though the effect did not reach significance ($Z = 1.55$, $p = .12$).

Lastly, we assessed whether the effect sizes found over the two studies are homogeneous in nature. All Q statistics were non-significant ($Qs < .70$, $ps > .40$), suggesting that there are no significant differences between the effect sizes of our study and Hsee and Rottenstreich's (2004) study 3.

2.3. Discussion

The scope insensitivity effect identified by Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004) was replicated in Study 1. When valuation by calculation was primed, donations increased as the scope of the charity increased. However, when valuation by feelings was primed, donations were not impacted by scope.

3. Study 2

To further advance the theoretical explanation of scope insensitivity effects found in study 1, we examine whether the understanding subdimension of emotional intelligence impacts scope insensitivity. Of the four dimensions of emotional intelligence, emotional understanding is most closely related to the reasoning and processing of emotional information (Mayer et al., 2001). Because the affective focus of the decision maker (either high or low) impacts whether judgments are based on emotion or scope (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004), the more a consumer reasons about and processes emotions associated with a charitable cause (i.e. high affective focus), the less impactful scope is in determining donation behavior. Since consumers high in emotional understanding give more weight to their emotions in decision making (Kidwell et al., 2008), we expect that consumers will become more scope insensitive as the ability to understand emotion increases.

Table 1
Meta-analysis of key effects of scope sensitivity between study 1 and Hsee and Rottenstreich (2004) study 3.

Location	Group	n	r	Fisher's Zr	Inverse variance weight (n-3)	Weight × effect size	Weighted mean effect size	S.E. of the mean effect size	Z (p-value)	Q (p-value)
H&R	Calculation	60	0.347	0.362	57	20.634	0.284	0.074	3.838 (<.001)	.501 (.479)
Us	Calculation	129	0.244	0.249	126	31.374				
		189			183	52.008				
H&R	Feeling	77	0.016	0.016	74	1.184	0.049	0.068	0.721 (.471)	.121 (.728)
Us	Feeling	144	0.065	0.066	141	9.306				
		221			215	10.490				
H&R	1 panda	69	0.289	0.297	66	19.602	0.215	0.071	3.04 (.002)	0.658 (.418)
Us	1 eagle	137	0.173	0.175	134	23.450				
		206			200	43.052				
H&R	4 pandas	68	0.097	0.098	65	6.370	0.110	0.071	1.549 (.121)	0.013 (.909)
Us	4 eagles	136	0.114	0.115	133	15.295				
		204			198	21.665				

Note — Z statistic tests whether weighted mean effect size differs from zero. Q statistic tests whether effect sizes entering into the mean differ from each other more than would be expected by chance if they came from a common population effect size.