

ARTICLES

Feelings and Consumer Decision Making: The Appraisal-Tendency Framework

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This article presents the Appraisal-Tendency Framework (ATF; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) as a basis for predicting the influence of specific emotions on consumer decision making. In particular, the ATF addresses how and why specific emotions carry over from past situations to color future judgments and choices. After reviewing the main assumptions and the 5 main principles of the framework, 2 streams of research are presented. One stream addresses emotional carryover effects on the assessment of risk; the other addresses carryover effects on the assessment of monetary value. Because risk assessment and value assessment are fundamental psychological processes, understanding them has the potential to yield manifold implications for consumer judgment and decision making. The concluding sections highlight limitations and future directions of the framework.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing experts have long known that people behave differently in good moods versus bad moods. A large industry is devoted to creating associations between emotionally filled “atmospheres” and specific products. In this article, we present the Appraisal-Tendency Framework (ATF; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) as a general theory of emotion-specific influences on consumer judgments and choices. We argue that the framework goes beyond common intuition and prior research, specifying, for example, the conditions under which emotions of the same valence will have similar versus opposite effects as a function of multiple factors in the framework. It is our hope that not only marketing

researchers but also consumers themselves will benefit from a greater understanding of these processes by which emotions shape decision making.

This article briefly summarizes the main assumptions of the framework and delineates five principles. After reviewing the assumptions and principles, two streams of research are presented. One stream addresses the assessment of risk; the other addresses the assessment of monetary value. These streams have been selected to exemplify the framework because of their direct relevance to consumer judgment and decision making.

THE ATF

Lerner and Keltner (2000, 2001) proposed the ATF as a basis for distinguishing the effects of specific emotions on judgment and decision making. The ATF assumes that specific emotions give rise to specific cognitive and motivational processes, which account for the effects of each emotion upon judgment and decision making. Here we

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briefly review the five principles that have emerged in empirical tests of this framework.

Principle 1: Integral and Incidental Emotions

The ATF distinguishes between two kinds of affective influences on judgment and choice. The first, *integral emotion*, encompasses influences of subjective experiences that are normatively relevant to present judgments and choices (for a discussion, see Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003). For example, experienced fear and anticipated regret when evaluating a gamble have been shown to influence how much one is willing to gamble (Larrick & Boles, 1995; Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003; Loomes & Sugden, 1982; Mellers, Schwartz, Ho, & Ritov, 1997). The second, *incidental emotion*, encompasses the (sometimes) puzzling influence of subjective emotional experiences that should be normatively irrelevant to present judgments and choices. For example, emotions produced by listening to music, experiencing bad weather, or reliving stressful events have been shown to influence judgments of unrelated topics and objects (Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Süsser, 1994; Forgas & Bower, 1987; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Such incidental carryover occurs even when decision makers are unaware of such influences and even when concrete economic outcomes are at stake (Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein, 2004).

Although both kinds of influences can exert strong effects on consumer judgment and decision making, the ATF has primarily focused on incidental influences for two reasons. First, incidental emotions can be experimentally manipulated independently from the judgments and decisions at hand, allowing one to test causal effects of emotions on judgments and choices. Second, from a normative standpoint in judgment and decision making, incidental influences are significantly less defensible influences. Indeed decision makers themselves regard such influences as unwanted (Wilson & Brekke, 1994). In our own studies, decision makers deny that such influences affect their own decision making even when the evidence indicates otherwise (Han & Lerner, 2006). In sum, the ATF concentrates on incidental influences to gain leverage for making causal inferences and to help decision makers attenuate unwanted influences.

Principle 2: Beyond Valence

Regardless of whether one focuses on integral or incidental influences, the majority of studies within the literature on affect and judgment have taken a valence approach, focusing on the effects of good and bad moods upon judgment and decision making (e.g., Bower, 1991; Isen, Shalke, Clark, & Karp, 1978; Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Kavanagh & Bower, 1985; Mayer, Gaschke, Braverman, & Evans, 1992; Wright & Bower, 1992). That is, positive and negative moods have been experimentally induced or observed naturalistically, and these general feeling states have been expected to produce

more positive and negative judgments respectively. Not long ago, readers of the affect-judgment literature could conclude that “the only relevant aspect of emotion is their valence” (Elster, 1998, p. 64). Indeed, a valence perspective on emotional influences has been productive, documenting a wide array of influences of good and bad moods upon judgments of satisfaction, causal judgments, and social cognitive processes such as stereotyping (for a review, see Forgas, 2003). Some argue that valence remains the organizing principle for emotion effects on judgment and decision making. For example, in his authoritative chapter in the handbook of affective sciences, Forgas (2003) concluded that “... most of the research suggests a fundamental affect-congruent pattern: positive affect improves, and negative affect impairs, the value of self conceptions” (p. 602). Although valence has been a powerful dimension for predicting emotion effects, it is only one dimension of emotion. The ATF harnesses the predictive power of this dimension and embeds it within a multidimensional theoretical framework.

Cognitive Appraisal Dimensions

Many emotion theorists have argued that a range of cognitive dimensions (including, but not limited to, valence and pleasantness) usefully differentiates emotional experience. Of the many excellent appraisal theories, one by Smith and Ellsworth (1985) is particularly useful for our concerns. In an empirical examination of appraisal dimensions, Smith and Ellsworth identified six cognitive dimensions that define the underlying appraisal patterns of different emotions: certainty, pleasantness, attentional activity, control, anticipated effort, and responsibility. Numerous other studies have found similar results regarding emotion-specific appraisal patterns (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1988; Weiner, 1980, 1986). Patterns of appraisals along these dimensions, thus, provide a basis for comparing and contrasting discrete emotions. For example, certainty and control are the central dimensions that distinguish anger from fear. Anger is associated with appraisals of certainty about what happened and individual control for negative events. Fear, on the contrary, is associated with appraisals of uncertainty about what happened and situational control for negative events. Happiness, although of positive valence, is associated with an elevated sense of certainty and individual control, just like anger (Averill, 1982; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Weiner, 1986). Therefore, happiness, at least in one respect, resembles anger more so than fear.

Core Appraisal Themes

At a more macro level of analysis, each emotion can also be defined by core appraisal themes. Appraisal themes, first proposed by Lazarus (1991), are thought to provide a convenient summary of specific harms or benefits that arise in the individual's ongoing interaction with the social environment. Emotion-specific core appraisal themes, in turn,

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