

MARKETING08-2006

IS HAPPINESS SHARED DOUBLED AND SADNESS SHARED HALVED?:
SOCIAL INFLUENCE ON ENJOYMENT OF HEDONIC EXPERIENCES

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Forthcoming: *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2006.

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ABSTRACT

Since many hedonic stimuli (e.g., movies, vacations, food, etc.) are consumed with others, it is important to know how social influence affects the enjoyment of shared experiences. Extrapolation from informational and normative influences suggests that enjoyment is enhanced when others offer positive opinions, and diminished when they offer negative opinions about shared stimuli. We propose an alternative model. Building on the need to belong (cf. Baumeister and Leary 1995) and the need for accuracy (cf. Trope 1975), we predict that enjoyment from sharing stimuli depends on consumer's perceived interpersonal agreement about the shared stimuli—with congruence of opinions enhancing, and incongruence diminishing, enjoyment of the shared experience. Results from three experiments support our predictions and indicate that, under some circumstances, social influence can operate in opposite directions on *judgments* of shared stimuli and on the *enjoyment* of sharing them.

Keywords: Social Influence; Experienced Utility

INTRODUCTION

Many hedonic consumption activities, such as shopping at a mall, going on vacation, eating at a restaurant, etc., are usually shared with others. This leads to the question of how sharing a hedonic activity (versus experiencing it alone) influences enjoyment from it. A variety of aphorisms, such as “happiness shared is doubled and sadness shared is halved” and “misery loves company” suggest that sharing both pleasant and unpleasant experiences can have a positive impact on enjoyment of shared experiences. However, there is little research that pertains directly to the effects of social influence on enjoyment of shared experiences. Although lay opinion suggests that sharing pleasant and unpleasant experiences can make them more enjoyable or less painful, it is unclear when, why, or even whether it is so.

At first blush, our inquiry appears related to social influence on judgments of shared stimuli (Asch 1955; Deutsch and Gerard 1955). Findings from this research indicate that social influence leads to conformity. People tend to concur with others’ opinions either in response to the informational value in others’ opinions (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975; Burnstein and Vinokur 1977; Larson et al. 2002) or because of a normative pressure to conform (Cruz, Henningsen and Williams 1999; Sanders and Baron 1977). Direct extrapolation from these findings suggests that the enjoyment from sharing hedonic stimuli will be enhanced when others provide positive judgments about the shared stimuli and diminished when they provide negative judgments about them. For example, if, while watching a movie, we perceive that others are enjoying it, we may alter our own opinions to be congruent with that of the others and thus enjoy it more; conversely, if we perceive that others are not enjoying the movie, we may enjoy it less.

There is a subtle, yet important, difference between the focus of previous research and that of ours. While past research has focused on *judgments* of stimuli, such as line lengths (Asch

1955, Deutsch and Gerard 1955) or product quality (e.g., Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975; Cohen and Golden 1972), we focus on *enjoyment* from the experience of sharing stimuli. Because our focus is on the affective reactions to the experience of sharing stimuli whereas that of previous research has been on the arguably more cognitive judgments of shared stimuli, the direct extrapolation suggested in the last paragraph may be inappropriate. As illustrated in the following example, social influence can operate in one direction on judgments of shared stimuli and in the opposite direction on enjoyment from sharing them.

Imagine that you are attending a ballet with a friend and that you find the performance to be of substandard quality. Imagine further that, just as you turn to your friend to express your negative opinion of the ballet, he exclaims, “This is fantastic, isn’t it?” While the friend’s more positive opinion of the ballet may improve your judgment of the performance—due to informational and normative influence—the incongruence between his opinion and your own may reduce the enjoyment you derive from watching the ballet with him. Now imagine, instead, that he turns to you and says, “Isn’t this just terrible?” While your judgment of the ballet may remain negative (or become even more so) as a result of exposure to your friend’s opinion, the fact that you are in agreement may increase your enjoyment of the shared experience.

This research contributes to the literature on social influence by providing an understanding of the factors that mediate the effects of exposure to others’ opinions on enjoyment of shared experiences. Our model builds on the premise that others’ opinions about shared stimuli provide information relevant to assessing the health of one’s interpersonal relationships and the validity of one’s judgments, and that the impact of social influence on enjoyment is mediated through these two mechanisms. Understanding these mechanisms is important not just because our examination—social influence on enjoyment of shared

experiences—covers new theoretical ground, but also because it provides directions to marketers interested in enhancing the hedonic appeal of their experiential offerings.

The rest of the paper is structured as follow. In the next section, we begin with an overview of the role that two goals—the need to belong and the need for accuracy—play in influencing the enjoyment of shared experiences. Then, we report results from two controlled experiments designed to test our predictions. Finally, we end with a discussion focused mainly on the theoretical implications of our findings.

EFFECTS ON ENJOYMENT OF EXPOSURE TO OTHERS' OPINIONS

Aristotle, Plato, Donne, and several others have commented on the social nature of humans and the many ways in which we rely on each other. More recent perspectives of our interdependence propose that the desire for social affiliation may be rooted in two broad instrumental motives—a *need to belong* and a *need for accuracy*. In this section, we develop the argument that enjoyment from sharing experiences is influenced through the satisfaction and frustration of both these needs.

The Need to Belong. Several researchers have proposed that humans have a strong and innate desire to form and maintain relationships with others, a motivation termed the need to belong (cf. Baumeister and Leary 1995; Gardner et al. 2000). Although some suggest that this need can be satisfied only through meaningful, non-trivial relationships (Shaver and Buhrmester 1983), others find that it may be satisfied even in temporary relationships, such as those one might have on an airplane or in a dentist's waiting room. For example, Brewer (1979) and Sherif et al. (1961/1988) find that people easily forge bonds with strangers, and display significant in-group loyalty and favoritism, even when group formation is based on random assignment (e.g.,

Tajfel et al. 1971). Evidence that negative feelings engendered by social loneliness (defined as insufficient social contact) and that experimentally manipulated anxiety may be assuaged by the mere presence of unknown others (e.g., DiTommaso and Spinner 1993; Saklofske and Yackulic 1989; Schacter 1959) are similarly consistent with the notion that the need to belong can be satisfied by temporary relationships.

In the context of sharing hedonic experiences with others, we posit that congruence of opinions engenders a sense of belonging and that incongruence of opinions leaves one feeling alienated. This is because people interpret conformity as a signal of psychological closeness and nonconformity as indicative of interpersonal differences that are potentially irreconcilable. Thus, we expect that exposure to congruent and incongruent opinions will lead to enhanced and diminished enjoyment, respectively, of shared experiences.

The Need for Accuracy. Other research has shown that people have a strong desire to hold veridical views of themselves and of their environments (Festinger 1954; Trope 1975). In a series of experiments (Trope 1975, 1979; Trope and Ben-Yair 1982), subjects were asked to choose among tasks that varied in their diagnosticity for assessing one's own abilities in relevant domains (e.g., ability to concentrate). These authors found, consistent with the operation of the need for accuracy, that subjects tended to choose tasks that were more (vs. less) diagnostic for assessing their abilities—even when these tasks were more difficult to perform (and hence carried a higher risk of failure). Evidence of the operation of the need for accuracy has been documented in other realms as well. For instance, Festinger (1954) and Wood (1989) argue that the drive for social comparisons of opinions and abilities is rooted in the motive to accurately assess the veridicality of one's opinions and hold accurate perceptions of one's abilities.

In the context of the present research, we expect that people will treat congruence of self-

other opinions as a measure of the accuracy of their own opinions. That is, evidence that others feel similarly about a shared stimulus will increase confidence in the accuracy of one's own judgments. Conversely, evidence that others feel differently about a shared stimulus will raise concerns that one is miscalibrated. As such, we expect that exposure to congruent and incongruent social information will reduce and increase, respectively, the uncertainty surrounding the veridicality of one's views. Research has shown that uncertainty is aversive because it leads to the experience of stress, nervousness and anxiety-related emotions (e.g., Roseman 1991; Raghunathan and Pham 1999). Thus, we expect that experiences in which people obtain congruent social information will be reassuring and, hence, more enjoyable, while those in which they obtain incongruent information will be disconcerting and hence, less enjoyable.

Based on the above discussion, we predict that:

H1: Exposure to congruent social information about hedonic stimuli will enhance enjoyment from the experience of sharing the stimuli, while exposure to incongruent social information will diminish enjoyment from it.

The roles played by the need to belong and the need for accuracy in influencing enjoyment of shared experiences are depicted in Figure 1.

--Insert Figure 1 about here--

Since both the need to belong and the need for accuracy are predicted to have similar effects on the enjoyment of shared experiences, it is important, from a theoretical perspective, to document evidence for the independent influence of each. We expect that certain contextual factors will amplify the impact of the need to belong, and that others will amplify that of the need for accuracy. Specifically, we expect that sharing an experience with someone with whom we feel a special sense of affiliation will raise the salience of the belongingness motive.

Likewise, we expect that sharing an experience with an “expert” in judging the shared stimuli will raise the salience of the accuracy motive. As such, we predict that:

H2: In contexts where the belongingness motive is salient, those exposed to congruent and incongruent opinions about shared stimuli will report greater and lower enjoyment, respectively, of the shared experience than will those not exposed to others’ opinions.

H3: In contexts where the accuracy motive is salient, those exposed to congruent and incongruent opinions about shared stimuli will report greater and lower enjoyment, respectively, of the shared experience than will those not exposed to others’ opinions.

EXPERIMENT 1: TV ADVERTISEMENTS STUDY

The objective of this experiment was twofold: (1) demonstrate that exposure to congruent (incongruent) social information about hedonic stimuli enhances (diminishes) enjoyment of shared experiences (H1), and (2) document the role played by the need to belong in moderating the impact of social influence on enjoyment of shared experiences (H2).

Pretest

We chose the experience of viewing pleasant and unpleasant TV ads as the context in which to test H1 and H2. Conversations with undergraduate subjects confirmed that viewing TV ads can be enjoyable (especially if the ads are humorous), or can be unpleasant and even irritating. To prevent familiarity with the ads from influencing subjects’ enjoyment ratings, we chose 24 television ads that either appeared before 1995 or were in a foreign language. We narrowed the ads down to a final set of six in two stages, using pretests involving a total of 20 subjects who rated the ads on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all enjoyable, 7 = very enjoyable). The three most enjoyable ads (a German ad for Tuborg beer, an Israeli social service ad promoting the use of motorcycle helmets, and an ad for the New York State Lottery) and the three least

enjoyable ads (a German ad celebrating diversity, an ad for a Turkish bank, and an ad promoting American-German ties) were chosen for use in the main study.

Main Experiment

Subjects and Design. A total of 135 undergraduates (69 women and 66 men) from the University of Texas at Austin participated in the main experiment for course credit. Each subject was randomly assigned to one of three information type conditions (congruent, incongruent, or control) and one of two ad-valence (pleasant or unpleasant) conditions.

Procedure. The experimental sessions were conducted one subject at a time, with each subject viewing either the three pleasant or the three unpleasant ads in the company of a confederate. Six different undergraduates (3 males and 3 females), whom we selected to be similar to the typical subject in age and physical characteristics played the role of the confederate (there was only one confederate per session).

The procedure unfolded as follows. The experimenter first asked the subject to fill out some preliminary forms. While the subject was engaged in this task, the confederate appeared and asked for permission to participate in the experiment. The experimenter acquiesced and gave the confederate a separate set of forms to complete. Then, the experimenter presented both the subject and the confederate with a questionnaire entitled “Advertisements Study,” which was introduced as an exploration of two features—pace and interestingness—that determine how much people enjoy TV ads. Subjects were told that they would be shown three ads and that their task was to rate these ads on these two critical dimensions and then provide other related evaluations as well.

Information Type and Affiliation Manipulations. The first page of the confederate's questionnaire indicated the information type (congruent, incongruent, or control) manipulation that he or she would administer during that session. In the congruent conditions, the confederate expressed out aloud the subject's predicted reactions to the ads. For example, in the pleasant-ad condition, a potential confederate reaction was, "That was very funny! I really liked it" or, "That was pretty good, wasn't it?" Analogously, for the unpleasant ads, a potential reaction was "This is terrible!" or, "What was that all about?" Conversely, in the incongruent conditions, the confederate expressed enjoyment of ads found unpleasant in the pretest and vice versa. In the control condition, the confederate was instructed to be "merely present" and to act "naturally and normally, without overtly or covertly signaling agreement or disagreement with the subject's perceived opinions of the ads." In order to promote spontaneity, the actual content of confederate reaction was not rigidly set. However, confederates familiarized themselves with a standard set of responses to help maintain consistency across sessions. Each confederate participated in two trial runs with real subjects, one each for the congruent and incongruent conditions. Data from these trial runs were discarded from the analyses.

Subjects were also assigned to one of two affiliation conditions (high vs. low). Those assigned to the high affiliation condition viewed and rated the ads in the presence of a confederate who wore a University of Texas T-shirt, carried a water bottle with the university's logo on it and, just before the experiment began, expressed a pro-university sentiment by uttering out aloud, "Go Longhorns!"¹ Researchers (e.g., Cialdini 1976; Lau 1989) have shown that students tend to develop a deep connection with their universities. We thus expected those assigned to the high affiliation condition to have a greater desire to develop a bond with the confederate. In the low affiliation condition, the confederate did not wear or carry accessories

¹ "Bevo" the Longhorn is the mascot of the University of Texas at Austin.

associated with the university and did not express a pro-university sentiment.

Dependent Variables. To lend credibility to the cover story, subjects were first asked to rate the pace of the ads (1 = too slow; 4 = just right; 7 = too fast) and their interestingness (1 = not so interesting; 7 = very interesting). Then, they were asked to indicate their “overall enjoyment from the experience of viewing and rating the TV ads” (1 = not at all enjoyable; 7 = very enjoyable) and “level of interest in participating in a similar future experiment” (1 = not at all interested; 7 = very interested).² These ratings formed our main dependent variables. In addition, subjects were asked to report how close they felt to the confederate (1 = Not at all Close; 7 = Very Close). This variable, adapted from Garnder et al. (2000), formed our measure of psychological closeness. Consistent with the operation of the need to belong, we expected greater psychological closeness in the congruent (vs. incongruent) condition.

Results

Data from four subjects who appeared suspicious of the confederate’s role was dropped. Data from the remaining 131 subjects was used in the analyses reported below.

The two measures of enjoyment of the experience (overall enjoyment and interest in participating in a similar future experiment) were highly correlated ($\alpha = .89$) and averaged to form an enjoyment index. This index was submitted to a 3 (information type: congruent, control, incongruent) \times 2 (ad-valence: pleasant, unpleasant) \times 2 (affiliation: high, low) ANOVA. Results

² We thus measured the post-consumption or *retrospective* utilities for the experience, rather than concurrent or *experienced* utilities (cf. Kahneman and Snell 1990; Novemsky and Ratner 2002). Measuring experienced utilities—which would involve eliciting the subjects’ moment-to-moment affective responses to the experience—would have proven somewhat disruptive, given that the social influence was designed to occur during the course of viewing and rating the ads. Specifically, we felt that the impact of social influence would be mitigated if a large part of the subject’s attentional capacity was used to provide moment-to-moment affective responses.

from this analysis are reported in Tables 1A and 1B.

The overall model was significant ($F(11, 119) = 40.48, p < .001$). Further, confirming the pretest results, subjects reported greater enjoyment of pleasant versus unpleasant ads, $M_s = 4.90$ and 4.34 , respectively, ($F(1, 119) = 7.58, p < .01$).

--Insert Tables 1A and 1B about here--

Need to Belong. The objective of this experiment was to show that exposure to congruent and incongruent social information would enhance and diminish, respectively, the enjoyment of shared experiences (H1), and that these effects are mediated by the fulfillment or frustration of the need to belong (H2). Consistent with H1, results revealed a main effect of information type ($F(2, 119) = 40.48, p < .01$). As predicted, enjoyment was highest among subjects in the congruent condition ($M = 5.70$), followed by those in the control ($M = 4.72$) and incongruent conditions ($M = 3.44$). Further, consistent with H2, a 2-way information type \times affiliation interaction, ($F(2, 119) = 9.48, p < .01$), emerged. Follow-up analyses revealed the source of this interaction: the simple effect of information type was more pronounced among subjects in the high versus low affiliation condition ($F(1, 119)s = 44.21$ and $7.64, p_s < .001 < .01$, respectively). Further analyses revealed that while the congruent $>$ control $>$ incongruent was significant in high affiliation condition, it was only marginally so in the low affiliation condition, for both the pleasant ads ($F(1, 119)s = 23.69$, and $3.01, p_s < .01$ and $.06$, respectively), and for the unpleasant ads ($F(1, 119)s = 20.78$ and $2.58, p_s < .01$ and $.08$, respectively).

These results demonstrate that the beneficial and detrimental effects of exposure to others' congruent and incongruent opinions, respectively, on enjoyment of the shared experience were amplified among subjects in the high (versus low) affiliation conditions. As such, these

results provide evidence in support of the operation of the need to belong.

Psychological Closeness. We obtained additional evidence in support of the need to belong via the measure of psychological closeness, which was submitted to a 3 (information type) \times 2 (ad-valence) \times 2 (affiliation) ANOVA. The overall model was significant ($F(11, 119) = 4.13, p < .001$) and revealed a main effect of information type ($F(1, 119) = 20.45, p < .001$). Subjects exposed to congruent information reported feeling psychologically closer to the confederate ($M = 4.56$) than those exposed to incongruent information ($M = 2.67$), with subjects in the control condition falling in between ($M = 3.51$). This result is consistent with the idea that exposure to congruent information helped subjects perceive a bond between themselves and the confederate, and that exposure to incongruent information diminished that perception. The only other result was an affiliation main effect ($F(1, 119) = 4.45, p < .05$). Those in the high affiliation condition reported feeling psychologically closer to the confederate ($M = 3.83$) than those in the low affiliation condition ($M = 3.23$), indicating that the affiliation manipulation worked as intended.

Discussion

We had predicted that the congruence between one's own opinion and that of another's would determine how much a shared experience is enjoyed (H1). Consistent with this prediction, subjects exposed to congruent (incongruent) social information enjoyed the experience more (less) than those in the control group, both for the pleasant ads and for the unpleasant ones. We also predicted that these effects were due to the fulfillment and frustration of the need to belong (H2). Consistent with this prediction, we found an information type \times affiliation interaction for both pleasant and unpleasant ads, and that, although follow-up analyses revealed that the

congruent > control > incongruent ordering of enjoyment held in both the high affiliation and low affiliation conditions, it was stronger in the former group. Further evidence in support of the operation of the need to belong was obtained through the finding that subjects in the congruent and incongruent conditions reported feeling more and less close, respectively, to the confederate than those in the control condition.

EXPERIMENT 2: ORANGE JUICE TASTE TESTING

The objective in Experiment 2 was two-fold. First, we wished to demonstrate support for H3: the operation of the need for accuracy. Second, in the interests of generalizability, we wished to test our predictions using an experience context different from the one used in experiment 1. Toward these objectives, we selected the experience of tasting and judging samples of orange juice as the context for this experiment. Informal talks with undergraduates had revealed that they believed that the quality of orange juice can be objectively determined. As such, we expected the need for accuracy to be particularly salient in this context.

Subjects and Design. 126 subjects (86 women and 40 men), a mix of graduate and undergraduate students, participated in this experiment either for course credit or for a compensation of \$10. The procedure shared several similarities with Experiment 1: the sessions were conducted one subject at a time, there were three information type (congruent, incongruent, control) and two juice valence (pleasant, unpleasant) conditions, and the experience unfolded in the presence of a confederate. However, there was one important difference. Rather than manipulate the affiliation between the subject and confederate (as we did in Experiment 1), we manipulated the perceived expertise of the confederate in judging the quality of the shared stimulus (orange juice). Consistent with H2, we expected the impact of social influence on

enjoyment to be amplified when the perceived expertise of the confederate was high, and reduced when it was low.

Procedure. One undergraduate (male) and one graduate (female) played the role of the confederate, and were used in sessions with the undergraduate and graduate subjects, respectively. As in Experiment 1, the confederate made an appearance after the subject had been seated. Once preliminary forms were filled out, the experimenter asked the subject and confederate to familiarize themselves with information contained in a booklet titled, “Orange Juice Taste Testing Manual.” The booklet informed the participants that a “leading orange juice manufacturer” was interested in “educating consumers on how to accurately assess the quality of orange juice,” and had developed a “workshop” to help consumers in this endeavor. Participants were then informed that they would take part in a short version of this workshop, in which they would taste two samples of orange juice and then judge the quality of these samples. Participants were also told that their ratings would be compared to those of a “national expert in judging the quality of orange juice” at the end of the experimental session. Thus, the instructions were designed to strengthen the subject’s belief that it was possible to objectively rate the quality of orange juice.

Expertise Manipulation. Following the experimenter’s briefing, the confederate remarked that he/she had participated in a similar workshop before and asked the experimenter whether the prior participation disqualified him/her from participation in the present experiment. The experimenter responded that this was not a concern and asked the confederate, “How well did you do the previous time?” The confederate’s response depended on the expertise condition. In the high expertise condition, the confederate remarked that he/she had done “very well” and that

“there was perfect agreement between my ratings and that of the expert.” In the low expertise condition, the subject said that he/she had done “very poorly” and that “my ratings were the exact opposite of the expert’s ratings.” In the control condition, the confederate remarked that he/she had done “reasonably well” and that “my ratings were in agreement with those of the experts for one sample, but not for the other.”

Following this exchange, the experimenter handed the subject and confederate a brochure in which four attributes—fragrance, sweetness, freshness, and consistency—were identified as being relevant for judging the quality of orange juice. Once subjects had read through the instructions on how to assess the quality of orange juice on these dimensions, they were asked to judge a “trial” cup of juice. This cup, prepared by mixing water and juice in the ratio of 1:4, served as a reference point for judging the next, “test” cup of juice. Consistent with findings of research on contrast effects (e.g., Raghunathan and Irwin 2001), we expected subjects to compare the quality of the test sample with that of the trial sample spontaneously. We gave subjects assigned to the pleasant (good juice quality) condition a test sample of fresh, unadulterated Tropicana orange juice, while we gave those assigned to the unpleasant (poor juice quality) condition a test sample prepared according to a formula outlined in Pechmann and Ratneshwar (1992). (Small quantities of vinegar and salt are added to diluted orange juice; the resulting mixture tastes distinctly, but not disgustingly, unpleasant.)

Exposure to congruent and incongruent social information occurred while tasting the test sample. Once subjects had taken the first sip of the test sample, the confederate commented on its quality. Depending on the information type condition, the confederate indicated, through verbal and non-verbal cues, that the cup of orange juice tasted good or bad (e.g., “Mmmm, this tastes really good,” or, “Ugh! This is awful!”). If the subject engaged the confederate in a

conversation (e.g., “Do you really think so?”), the confederate made follow-up remarks consistent with his/her initial comment. In the control condition, the confederate was passive and did not verbally or non-verbally express any opinion.

Dependent Variables. Following the test sample tasting, under the guise of obtaining feedback about the procedure used in the “orange juice tasting workshop,” we asked subjects to rate their: (1) overall enjoyment from participating in the workshop (1 = not at all enjoyable; 7 = very enjoyable), (2) interest in participating in similar workshops in the future (1 = not at all interested; 7 = very interested), and (3) confidence in their ability to judge the quality of orange juice (1 = not at all confident; 7 = very confident). The last measure was elicited to provide further evidence of the operation of the need for accuracy. We expected, consistent with the operation of this motive, that those in the congruent (vs. incongruent) condition would express more confidence in their judgments.

Results

The two measures of enjoyment were highly correlated ($\alpha = .72$) and thus averaged to form an index of enjoyment. This index was submitted to a 3 (information type: congruent, control, incongruent) \times 2 (juice valence: pleasant, unpleasant) \times 2 (expertise: high, low) ANOVA. Results from this analysis are reported in Table 2A and 2B.

The overall model was significant ($F(11, 110) = 9.11, p < .001$). Enjoyment was higher in the pleasant than in the unpleasant juice valence condition ($M_s = 5.13$ and 3.60 , respectively; $F(1, 110) = 68.24, p < .0001$), confirming that the juice samples tasted as intended.

--Insert Table 2A and 2B here--

Need for Accuracy. The objective in this experiment was to replicate the beneficial and detrimental effects of exposure to congruent and incongruent opinions on enjoyment (H1), and to demonstrate that these effects were due to the operation of the need for accuracy (H3). Consistent with H1, a main effect of information type emerged ($F(2, 110) = 11.87, p < .001$). Enjoyment was highest among subjects in the congruent condition ($M = 4.82$), followed by those in the control ($M = 4.50$) and incongruent conditions ($M = 3.79$). Further, consistent with H3, an information type \times expertise interaction ($F(2, 110) = 3.41, p < .05$) also emerged. Follow up analyses revealed a simple effect of information type in the high expertise condition ($F(1, 110) = 13.80, p < .001$), but not in the low expertise condition ($F(1, 110) = 1.26, p > .25$). Consistent with H3, while the congruent $>$ control $>$ incongruent ordering was maintained in the high expertise condition, it was not in the low expertise condition, both for the pleasant tasting juice ($F(1, 110)s = 5.21$ and $1.03, p < .05$ and $> .40$, respectively) and for the unpleasant juice, ($F(1, 119) = 9.50$ and $1.19, ps < .01$ and $> .30$, respectively).³

Confidence in Judgments. Subjects' self-report of confidence in judgments of the orange juice, which we submitted to a 3 (information type) \times 2 (juice valence) \times 2 (expertise) ANOVA, provided additional evidence in support of the operation of the need for accuracy. Results revealed an information type main effect ($F(2, 110) = 5.60, p < .01$) and an information type \times expertise interaction ($F(1, 110) = 3.60, p < .05$). Subjects in the congruent information condition reported the greatest confidence in their ratings ($M = 4.56$), while those in the incongruent information condition reported the least confidence ($M = 3.75$), with the control subjects falling

³The only other effect was a juice-valence \times expertise interaction, which approached significance ($F(1, 119) = 3.57, p < .07$). This effect was driven by the pronounced difference in enjoyment of the pleasant versus unpleasant juice among subjects in the high ($M = 1.89$) versus low ($M = 1.18$) expertise condition. Because this result does not pose a threat to our model, however, we do not elaborate on it.

between ($M = 4.18$). The congruent > control > incongruent ordering was maintained for those in the high expertise condition ($M_s = 4.85, 4.40$ and 3.40 , respectively), $F(1,110) = 9.12, p < .01$, but not for those in the low expertise condition ($M_s = 4.26, 4.28$ and 4.10 , respectively), $F < 1$.

Discussion

As hypothesized, in the context of assessing the quality of orange juice, the need for accuracy played a role in the impact of social influence on enjoyment. We found an information type \times expertise interaction, and the congruent > control > incongruent ordering held for both the pleasant and unpleasant juice conditions, but only among subjects in the high expertise condition. Providing further evidence of the need for accuracy, when faced with an expert confederate, subjects in the congruent (incongruent) condition reported feeling more (less) confident about their ratings than those in the control condition. We found no effect when the confederate was not viewed as an expert.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

It is commonplace for consumers to share hedonic consumption activities. For example, we usually eat out, shop, watch a movie, or vacation in the company of others. As such, examining how others' presence impacts our enjoyment of shared experiences is both theoretically important, and substantively relevant. This research takes a first step toward examining how exposure to others' opinions impacts the enjoyment of shared experiences. Our model builds on the premise that others' opinions provide more than just information about shared stimuli—they also provide information on the health of interpersonal relationships and on the confidence one should have in one's judgments. Specifically, we propose that congruence of

opinions about shared stimuli enhances enjoyment of shared experiences both by engendering a feeling of belonging and by increasing confidence in the accuracy of our views and, conversely, that incongruence of opinions diminishes such enjoyment by decreasing both the sense of belonging and the confidence in the accuracy of our views. Results from two controlled experiments provide support for these propositions.

Since the operation of both the need to belong and the need for accuracy imply similar effects on enjoyment of shared experiences, it was important to demonstrate their independent roles in the context of social influence on enjoyment of shared experiences. Towards this objective, we manipulated factors that increased the salience of the need to belong in Experiment 1 and those that increased the salience of the need for accuracy in Experiment 2. As expected, both manipulations moderated the impact of exposure to others' opinions on enjoyment of shared experiences, attesting to the independent roles of the need to belong and the need for accuracy. Results pertaining to psychological closeness and confidence in judgments, collected in Experiments 1 and 2 respectively, provided further evidence for the operation of these two motives in contexts involving social influence on enjoyment of shared experiences.

Our findings have relatively straightforward implications for managers of hedonic experiences. Specifically, they suggest that promoting interactions among participants whose reactions to the experience are similar will increase the enjoyment of the experience and thus encourage them to repeat it. Allowing individuals with dissimilar reactions to mingle, in contrast, is likely to have detrimental effects on repeat purchase. These implications generalize both to experiences generally pleasant (e.g., shopping, eating out, etc.) as well as to those that are generally unpleasant (e.g., physical training workshops, alcoholics anonymous meetings, etc.).

Theoretical Implications and Future Research Directions

Group Decision Making. Although our findings have implications for a variety of research streams, they have the most direct implications for research on group decision making. As mentioned earlier, previous work in this area established that exposure to others' opinions about shared stimuli leads to conformity, in response to either the informational value in others' opinions or to the normative pressure to conform. Juxtaposing these findings with our own indicates that social influence can operate in opposite directions on judgments of shared stimuli versus enjoyment from sharing them. For instance, when sharing unpleasant stimuli, exposure to congruent opinions about the stimuli is likely to drive their judgments further down, while simultaneously making the shared experience more palatable. Likewise, when sharing pleasant stimuli, exposure to incongruent opinions about them is likely to drive their judgments upward, while simultaneously making the shared experience less palatable.

Future research should be aimed at gaining a better understanding of the processes by which social influence produces divergent effects on judgments of shared stimuli vs. judgments of enjoyment of shared experiences. Presumably, it is only in contexts in which the salience of the need to belong and/or that of the need for accuracy are high that the judgments of stimuli and judgments of enjoyment of shared experiences exhibit divergence. Alternatively, it is possible that such divergences are due, at least in part, to the cognitive vs. affective nature of the judgments of stimuli and the affective nature of judgments of enjoyment of shared experiences, respectively. It would be interesting to assess whether and to what extent such divergence in judgments are mitigated when the salience of the need to belong and the need for accuracy are low, or when the stimuli being judged are of a more affective or hedonic nature). Such an exploration would be potentially important for those interested in assessing the *holistic* impact of

social influence—on both judgments of shared stimuli and on how one feels about the experience. Pursuing such a line of enquiry would allow us to speak both to the issue of group influence on task-related variables (as does the bulk of previous research on group decision making) and to the arguably more important issue of group cohesion and morale.

Balance Theory and Affect Contagion. Since our results share similarities with both balance theory and affect contagion, it is useful to compare and contrast these theories with our own. According to balance theory (Heider 1958), nonconforming opinions about a shared stimulus creates an imbalance, inducing a state of dissonance that is typically resolved through attitude change either toward the person with whom the stimulus is being shared, or toward the shared stimulus. Our findings in the incongruent condition are conceptually compatible with this account. That is, as per balance theory, dissonance induced by exposure to incongruent social information may be the reason for the diminished enjoyment in this condition. Given this possibility, it would be interesting to examine how the belongingness and accuracy goals relate to the creation of balance and imbalance in influencing enjoyment of shared experiences.

The affect contagion literature (Barsade 2002; Howard and Gengler 2002) suggests that how others feel about a shared stimulus influences how we feel about it. Thus, if I like a movie, my feelings are likely to be transferred to those watching the movie with me. While results obtained in the congruent conditions of our experiments are consistent with these findings, the incongruent condition results, in which others' positive opinions about unpleasant stimuli and negative opinions about pleasant stimuli diminished enjoyment, are not. Nevertheless, given the obvious relevance of affect contagion to our research, future research should examine the relative effects of contagion versus the operation of the belongingness and accuracy motives.

Concluding Remarks

We conclude with a short commentary on the likely moderating role of several other variables on the relationship between exposure to social information and enjoyment of shared experiences. Festinger (1954) and others (e.g., Brown et al. 1992) have suggested that social comparisons with similar (versus dissimilar) others are likely to be judged as more valid. We thus expect that perceived self-other similarity will moderate the impact of exposure to social information on enjoyment. Second, individual differences in propensity to seek uniqueness (cf. Fromkin 1972) may moderate the impact of exposure to social information on enjoyment. In consumption contexts, the need for uniqueness manifests itself in the tendency to choose options that are different from the choices made by others (e.g., Ariely and Levav 2000; Ratner and Kahn 2002), suggesting that exposure to incongruent social information may actually *enhance* enjoyment of shared events among individuals high on this need. However, this type of effect may be obtained only when the need for uniqueness is situationally or dispositionally more salient than the need to belong or the need for accuracy. Finally, it is possible that merely being with others can enhance enjoyment of shared experiences (e.g., DiTommaso and Spinner 1993; Saklofske and Yackulic 1989). Although some of the subjects in Experiment 1 were in the company of “merely present” confederates, we cannot comment on whether these subjects enjoyed the experience more, since our experiments did not incorporate the appropriate comparison group (subjects who were alone). Still, it is worth noting that among subjects sharing the experience with a merely present confederate (control condition), those in the high (versus low) affiliation condition reported greater enjoyment. This suggests that mere social presence has a beneficial impact on enjoyment, but that this effect is obtained *only* when one feels a sense of affiliation with the other.

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TABLES 1A AND 1B

TABLE 1A

EXPERIMENT 1: RESULTS FROM OMNIBUS ANOVA WITH INFORMATION TYPE, AD-VALENCE AND AFFILIATION AS PREDICTORS OF ENJOYMENT

| Source | F Value | p-value |
|---|---------|---------|
| Model | 10.47 | .001 |
| Information type | 40.48 | .001 |
| Ad-valence | 7.58 | .01 |
| Affiliation | 0.61 | .54 |
| Information type × Ad-valence | 0.21 | .64 |
| Information type × Affiliation | 9.48 | .001 |
| Ad-valence × Affiliation | 0.17 | .68 |
| Information type × Ad-valence X Affiliation | 0.30 | .74 |

TABLE 1B

EXPERIMENT 1: MEAN ENJOYMENT RATINGS ACROSS INFORMATION TYPE, AD-VALENCE, AND AFFILIATION CONDITIONS

| | Pleasant Ads | | Unpleasant Ads | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | High Affiliation | Low Affiliation | High Affiliation | Low Affiliation |
| Congruent | 6.35 ^a | 5.72 ^a | 5.78 ^a | 4.95 ^a |
| Control | 5.50 ^a | 4.71 ^b | 4.67 ^b | 4.00 ^b |
| Incongruent | 3.13 ^b | 4.00 ^b | 2.58 ^c | 4.04 ^b |

Note: Different superscripts within a column imply significance at $\alpha < .05$.

TABLES 2A AND 2B

TABLE 2A

EXPERIMENT 2: RESULTS FROM OMNIBUS ANOVA WITH INFORMATION TYPE, JUICE VALENCE AND EXPERTISE AS PREDICTORS OF ENJOYMENT

| Source | F Value | p-value |
|--|---------|---------|
| Model | 9.11 | .001 |
| Information type | 11.68 | .001 |
| Juice Valence | 68.24 | .01 |
| Expertise | 0.18 | .67 |
| Information type × Juice-valence | 0.64 | .53 |
| Information type × Expertise | 3.48 | .05 |
| Juice-valence × Expertise | 3.64 | .07 |
| Information type × Juice-valence X Expertise | 0.29 | .74 |

TABLE 2B

EXPERIMENT 2: MEAN ENJOYMENT RATINGS ACROSS INFORMATION TYPE, JUICE VALENCE, AND EXPERTISE CONDITIONS

| | Pleasant Sample | | Unpleasant Sample | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | High Expertise | Low Expertise | High Expertise | Low Expertise |
| Congruent | 6.00 ^a | 5.22 ^a | 4.25 ^a | 3.79 ^a |
| Control | 5.44 ^{a,b} | 4.81 ^a | 3.69 ^{a,b} | 4.06 ^a |
| Incongruent | 4.63 ^b | 4.73 ^a | 2.45 ^b | 3.35 ^a |

Note: Different superscripts within a column imply significance at $\alpha = .05$.

FIGURE 1

BELONGINGNESS AND ACCURACY AS
MEDIATORS OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE ON ENJOYMENT OF SHARED EXPERIENCE

