

**ESSAYS ON THE ROLE OF SELF-CONTROL
IN
CONSUMER DECISION MAKING**



**A THESIS
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By

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Abstract

The rising cases of overconsumption and overspending have brought significant attention to self-control. Consumers are likely to exercise self-control to refrain from indulgences and to impede impulses. Impulses can be gratified in the short term, but in the long term, impulsive behavior can result in adverse consequences. This dissertation examines the role of self-control in various decision contexts (such as, marketer and consumer perspective) using an experimental-based method. Specifically, we show how self-control benefits and the desire to exercise self-control influence consumers' judgments and decisions.

In Essay 1, titled “*Old is not always Gold: The role of Temporal Alignment in shaping the downstream effects of Firm’s Longevity,*” twelve experiments ($N = 1,362$) document that contrary to dominant belief, longevity is not universally beneficial for a firm, and its positive impact is contingent on the fit with the benefits offered by the focal firm. It is theorized and shown that consumers temporally align indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits with old (vs. young) firms. This alignment between a firm’s longevity and benefit (indulgence vs. self-control) has downstream consequences. Further, this effect is explained through perceived expertise leading to congruence. Next, we elucidate the boundary condition for the hypothesized effect. Lastly, we ruled out an alternative mechanism.

In Essay 2, titled “*Not in control, will take the set: How sets impact purchase quantities,*” eleven experimental studies ($N = 2,113$) document “mere-set effect”- *how* and *why* the products’ presence (vs. absence) as a set impacts shoppers’ purchase quantity. This effect transpires through purchase norms. Further, we examine the boundary condition by unraveling the impact of self-control as a trait and primed variable. Next, we show that externally induced restraint through the budget and diet restrictions impacts this effect. Importantly, we demonstrate that buyers feel pain when they are restrained from buying sets. Further, we show

that when there are external constraints on consumption, under set frames, individuals may ignore such constraints and justify ignoring them by making external attributions.

The findings of both essays provide substantial theoretical and managerial implications. Essay 1 results suggest the usage of longevity judiciously such that it should temporally align with the benefit offered by the focal firm. It contributes to product benefit evolution literature. Essay 2 findings explain how the mere presence of a set frame can impact the purchase, thus adding to the set literature. Notably, the pain resulting from deviation contributes theoretically and shows how forceful deviation from sets can evoke pain. Taken together, the findings of both the essays have implications for self-control, longevity, product category evolution, arbitrary set designing, pain, purchase norms, consumer judgments, and decision making.

Keywords: Self-control, Consumer decision making, Longevity, Sets

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