

The Road Not Taken: The Effect of Forming Pre-Choice Product Expectations and Making a Choice on Subsequent Consumption Enjoyment

Naomi Mandel, Arizona State University

Stephen M. Nowlis, Washington University, St. Louis

We examine the joint effects of forming expectations, making a choice, and consuming that choice on consumption enjoyment. We find that when consumers form expectations and make a choice but do not consume, we replicate previous cognitive dissonance findings (Brehm 1956) supporting the spreading of alternatives. However, when consumers form expectations, make a choice, and then consume that choice, consumption enjoyment decreases due to the convergence of option attractiveness after consumption. We explore several possible explanations for these findings, including regret/disappointment, expectation disconfirmation, and psychological discomfort reduction.